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ABSTRACT

These 28 essays recount popular education's history and its multiple uses in the labor movement today: to organize the unorganized, to develop new leaders and activists, and to strengthen labor and community alliances. They explore its other facets: theater and culture, economics education, workplace safety and health, and classroom use and address experiences from Canada and the United States (US)-Mexico border. The essays are "Popular Education" (Bernard); "Popular Education, Labor, and Social Change" (Hurst); "Highlander and Labor" (Williams, Sessions); "Organizing Public Sector Workers in Puerto Rico" (Delp, Outman-Kramer); "Stamford, Connecticut, Case Study" (McAlevey); "Paolo Freire Hits L.A.'s Mean Streets" (Bacon); "Year 2000 Justice for Janitors Campaign" (Arellano); "Las Vegas Hotel Workers Find a Voice" (Lee, Baker); "Empowering the Members' Voice" (Del Valle); "Economic Justice in the Los Angeles Figueroa Corridor" (Haas); "Fighting for a Living Wage in Santa Monica" (Rothstein); "Just Transition Alliance" (View); "Power of Voices" (Williams); "Battle in Seattle" (Brown); "On Theater and the Labor Movement" (Delp, Outman-Kramer); "Forum Theater" (Delp); "Theater for Worker Health and Safety" (Dooley); "Experiences with Popular Economic Education" (Teninty); "Justice for Avondale Workers" (Washington); "Building a Worker Health and Safety Movement" (Delp); "Workplace Learning, Literacy, and English for Speakers of Other Languages" (Chenven); "English Classes at the Union Hall" (Utech); "Labor in the Schools" (Tubach); "Labor Deserves Credit" (Schurman); "Case Method in Labor Leadership Education" (Bernard); "Confronting Trade Policies from the Bottom Up" (Delp, De Lara); and "Worker-Educators and Union

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Transformation" (Thomas, Martin). A resources list consists of 18 United States, 5 Canadian, 2 Latin American, and 1 Asian organizations and 2 international networks. (YLB)

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TEACHING FOR CHANGE

Popular Education and the Labor Movement

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TEACHING FOR CHANGE

Popular Education and the Labor Movement

Edited by

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Cover photo: Deisy Cabrera from the Los Angeles Justice for Janitors campaign participates in a March 8 International Womens Day Action. Courtesy Stephanie Arellano.

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Introduction

By Kent Wong

Popular education has played a significant role within the U.S. labor movement over the years and continues to even today. Yet its role is largely unknown among labor leaders, organizers, and even some labor educators. This is the first book of its kind to capture the stories and experiences of popular educators in the U.S. labor movement.

U.S. educators have drawn inspiration from the teachings of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and his most famous work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Within the United States, the best-known popular education school, the Highlander Research and Education Center, has served movements for social change for generations. Founded by Myles Horton in 1932 in Tennessee, the Highlander Center played a critical role in educational initiatives to support labor organizing in the 1930s and again played a central role in the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

But the U.S. labor movement has not always embraced a philosophy of teaching for social change and transformation. Unlike labor movements in Canada and Brazil that have viewed education as an integral part of organizing and union building, the approach to labor education in the United States has historically been more narrow and conservative. The change in leadership within the U.S. labor movement in 1995 brought with it a renewed energy and spirit and opened the door to new ideas. Labor educators and union leaders have increasingly adopted a popular education approach to building the labor movement.

A primary purpose of this book is to draw from a broad cross section of labor educators who are creatively using popular education in their work, and to promote an environment where we can learn from one another. There is no unanimous opinion on what constitutes popular education, nor a uniform popular education methodology that is consistently applied in practice.

However, there are consistent themes among the voices captured in this book. Popular educators embrace a vision of education that links theory and practice, a philosophy that supports social change and that challenges existing power relationships, and a methodology that is learner-centered and values the knowledge and experience of the workers and participants.

Courtesy UCLA Labor Center.

Participants at an L.A. popular education workshop develop a labor education timeline.

The stories in this book recount the multiple ways that popular education is being used in the labor movement today: to organize the unorganized, to develop new leaders and activists, and to strengthen labor and community alliances. This book also explores other facets of popular education, including theater and culture, economics education, workplace safety and health, and the use of popular education in the classroom. The final chapter addresses experiences from Canada and the U.S.-Mexico border.

Elaine Bernard, director of the Harvard Trade Union Program, leads the oldest union leadership school in the country and has been an outspoken proponent of popular education both here in the United States and in her native Canada. In chapter one she helps to define popular education in a contemporary context. Also featured is UC Berkeley professor John Hurst who has worked for years to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of popular education and who has linked the academic community with the broader community of popular educators. The final contributors to this chapter on history are Susan Williams, a longtime Highlander Center staff member and educator, and Jim Sessions, currently with the AFL-CIO Union Community Fund and a former director of the Highlander Center.

José La Luz has been a leading voice in popular education from his years of organizing in New York to his current work in Puerto Rico. In chapter two he and Annette González describe their recent organizing victories with public sector workers in Puerto Rico. Jane McAlevey discusses how the use of power analysis was decisive in a series of union organizing victories in Stamford, Connecticut. And David Bacon shares lessons about a nontraditional approach to organizing day laborers in Los Angeles.

Although the work of the Los Angeles Justice for Janitors campaign is known nationally and internationally, what is less known is the critical role of popular education in developing rank-and-file leaders. In chapter three Stephanie Arellano describes how popular education was indispensable in preparing for the historic strike in 2000. Pam Tau Lee from the UC Berkeley Labor Occupational Health Program describes popular education and participatory action research initiatives that supported leadership development among Las Vegas hotel workers. Katarina Davis Del Valle describes her work integrating popular education within the Service Employees International Union.

Courtesy UCLA Labor Center.

Kent Wong from the UCLA Labor Center with other participants at an L.A. popular education workshop on globalization.

In chapter four Gilda Haas reports on the work of Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE), a popular education center in Los Angeles that has developed ground-breaking work on economic justice. The L.A. Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) is also a leading force for economic justice, and Vivian Rothstein describes a living wage campaign that has had national impact. Jenice View describes the role of popular education in the environmental justice movement, and Susan Williams reports on the work of the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network. The final article in the chapter, by Liz Brown, captures the role of popular education in the historic "Battle in Seattle" that mobilized 50,000 people to shut down the meeting of the World Trade Organization.

As described in chapter five culture and theater have always been a central component of popular education. Actor, director, playwright, and singer Elise Bryant is a leader in this arena and has developed worker theater initiatives in Michigan and in the Washington, D.C., area to build the labor movement. Other adaptations of theater for worker education are also described here, including the use of "forum theater" and the role of worker skits, as pioneered by Peter Dooley, to demonstrate the political and economic context of health and safety organizing.

Ellen Teninty reports in chapter six on the work of Just Economics, a women's collective that has developed a grassroots education approach to economic analysis and organizing. Susan Washington, former director of the AFL-CIO Education Department, addresses the critical role of popular education in a major struggle of shipyard workers in the South. The "Common Sense Economics" program first developed by Bill Fletcher and the AFL-CIO Education Department represented a major breakthrough by the U.S. labor movement in both embracing popular education and in promoting a critical analysis of capitalism.

Linda Delp, one of our coeditors, has a long history in the field of occupational safety and health, another arena where popular education has been successfully and extensively used within labor unions. Chapter seven is based on her interviews with educators in various parts of the country.

Articles in chapter eight demonstrate the potential use of popular education in a variety of classroom settings. Laura Chenven and Jenny Lee Utech present examples of how unions can use English literacy and basic skills classes to build leadership among often overlooked segments of their membership. High school teacher Linda Tubach has pioneered labor education in the public schools and introduced a popular education curriculum that has reached high school teachers and students throughout the country. Both Susan Schurman and Elaine Bernard share their perspectives on integrating a popular education approach into the National Labor College and the Harvard Trade Union Program.

Finally, on the international front, Juan De Lara and Linda Delp describe in chapter nine their work promoting cross-border solidarity between the United States and Mexico using popular education. We are also very fortunate to have an article from two exceptional Canadian popular educators, D'Arcy Martin and Barb Thomas, who have made immense contributions to this field and who share their perspectives on the Canadian experience.

Susan Schurman, president of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies-The National Labor College, is one of our coeditors; the George Meany Center-The National Labor College and the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education are copublishers of this book. It is extraordinary that the AFL-CIO's highest-ranking educator embraces popular education, and we are indeed fortunate to have a strong partnership between the AFL-CIO's educational institution and the UCLA Labor Center.

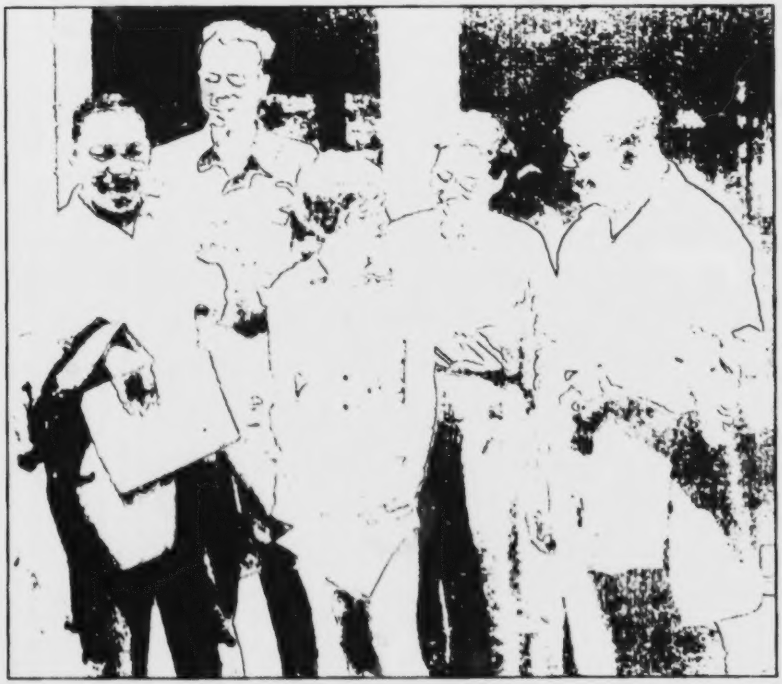
The many voices captured in this book represent a much broader network of popular educators, scholars, activists, and organizers who are working together to transform the American labor movement. We are fortunate to be part of a community we can learn from as we grow together. At the end of the book is a resource guide to facilitate ongoing dialogue with others who have experience with popular education. We are also fortunate to learn from many who have paved the way in years past.

To Paulo Freire, to Myles Horton, and to the ones who have gone before us, we dedicate this book.

Courtesy Highlander Center.

Progressive labor activists and leaders Myles Horton and Paulo Freire meet at the Highlander Center, 1987.

History of Popular Education in the Labor Movement



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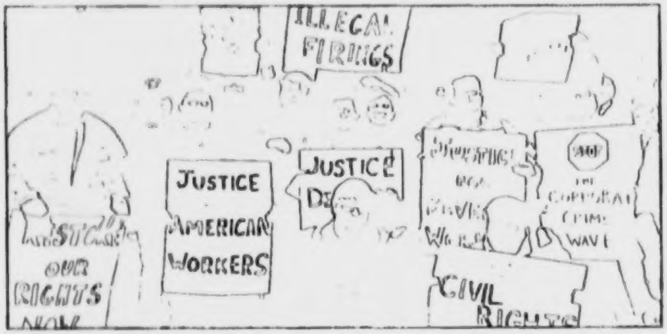

Courtesy Elaine Bernard.

Popular Education: Training Rebels with a Cause[1]

By Elaine Bernard

Most labor education, and certainly the best of it, is advocacy. Many educators from other fields shudder at the notion of advocacy, arguing that good education should be ideologically neutral. But I would argue that there is no such thing as "neutral" education. Even public educational institutions such as universities are advocates whether they admit to it or not. Business schools, which see themselves as "neutrals," are unapologetic advocates of capitalism, markets, and profits. I can't think of a single business school that gives equal time to nonprofit or even public enterprise, or that balances its presentation of management philosophy with perspectives on workers' rights. The acceptance of advocacy by business schools and other professional programs within universities stands in marked contrast to labor education and labor studies programs, which are constantly under fire in the academy for their advocacy on behalf of working people and unions. So, first, let's get a grip on ourselves and admit that **we're advocates for democracy in the workplace and for a just and equitable society. And we recognize that for workers to be able to both achieve rights in the workplace and exercise those rights they need a union.**

As labor educators, we unapologetically advocate economic and social justice. The notion that we should take a neutral stance on issues like democratic rights and racial equality is sufficient to demonstrate the absurdity of adopting a mythical neutral stance in labor education. **Unions are organizations of workers that allow them to participate in decision making in the workplace. They must be free from state and employer influence.** I'm not neutral on unions, nor on workers' right to participate in decisions that affect them. Labor education is about promoting democratic values and workers' sense of entitlement as members of a democratic society. It is also about helping workers to organize themselves and their institutions more effectively in order to achieve their goals.

Popular education, as both a liberating theory and a critical, reflective practice, is especially well suited for adult learners and is increasingly being experimented with by labor educators. But we need to understand popular education as more than a compendium of stimulating games and exercises used to deliver a prepackaged message. **The real power of popular education is not its form but its content. The core content of popular education is critical thinking and empowerment.** And here we confront the crux of the problem for labor educators: do we really *want* critical thinking in union education? Of course we want workers to think critically about the boss, capitalism, and the economy. But what happens when these same workers apply the tools they have learned to their own organization—to our unions, our leadership, and our practices? This stuff can land a labor educator in hot water!

Popular education begins with people's own experiences. It gives them the tools to analyze their situation and to take action to transform themselves and their conditions. For labor educators, popular education helps us generate an assertive, critically thinking, united workforce that participates in unions. This kind of participation can make unions the vital, democratic, collective organizations they need to be to forge a community of interest among workers and to fight for rights in the workplace and justice for working people in the broader society.

But to achieve this educational goal we need to unleash the full power of popular education and not limit ourselves to promoting the form without the critical—including self-critical—content. That is, we need to understand the difference between education and propaganda. Clever propaganda gives people rhetoric to be used on opponents while reinforcing myths about our own virtues. In writing about what they term the "propaganda model" as it applies to the U.S. media, Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman show how U.S. commentators focus on the transgressions of foreign enemies while justifying or ignoring similar behavior by the U.S. government or its allies.[2] **Clever propagandists don't tell outright lies. Those are relatively easy to disprove. Instead they provide half-truths knowing that a considerable part of the distortion will stick.**

Understanding the difference between popular education and propaganda is vital in the field of labor education. In labor education, propaganda is about teaching what we sometimes call "the line." This involves treating union members as empty heads that need to be given the proper view of the world or manipulated to see things "our way." This approach to labor education is insulting to workers' intelligence. It is fundamentally at odds with genuine popular education. And in the long run, it is counterproductive as a strategy for developing a critical, socially engaged, and powerful labor movement.

Popular education is about transformation and, like any type of genuine education, it will shake things up, often in unintended ways. Developing a critical culture within the labor movement—one that is more open to free-ranging debates and discussion of controversial internal issues—is essential to the growth and strengthening of organized labor. And education, especially popular education, has a crucial role to play in this resurgence.

American labor historian Staughton Lynd recently published a book titled *We Are All Leaders*, describing the growth of the CIO and its role in the labor battles of the 1930s.[3] As Lynd explains, much of the strength of the CIO came from the extraordinary resilience of its rank-and-file activists who insisted upon their inalienable right to participate in key decisions of their unions. As the labor movement has declined in density from 35 percent of the workforce in the 1950s to less than 14 percent of the workforce in the twenty-first century, the task of reconstruction and revitalization is massive. To grow by even one percentage point a year, U.S. labor will need to organize one million workers annually. Such a challenge demands an expanding layer of new leaders at all levels of the movement. Popular education will be an essential tool for training these leaders. The North American labor movement is exciting today largely because we are beginning to experiment with popular education—but if the movement is to succeed in meeting the challenges of the new century it will need the critical content of popular education along with its form.

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[1] This article previously appeared in *Our Times* 16 (September/October 1997), in a slightly different form. Reprinted with permission from the author.

[2] Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

[3] Straughton Lynd, ed., *We Are All Leaders: The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1996).

Courtesy Frontier College.

Popular Education, Labor, and Social Change

By John Hurst

Precious little social change in the world has occurred that has not involved education, except that which has come from the barrel of a gun. People's knowledge and understanding of their world is the consequence of education, regardless of its source. It can be by indoctrination, propaganda, rote memory, reflected-upon experience, or critical inquiry and dialogue—but it is all education. The issue at hand is what kind of education, to what end, and in whose interest? Though education is often an unseen and unsung part of movements for social change and in workers' struggles to organize and win just working conditions and compensation, its presence and contributions can usually be excavated with a little effort. Making our educational practices visible and then reflecting on them is an essential component of improving our educational efforts in the labor movement.

The Southern Civil Rights Movement: The Convergence of Popular Education, Labor, and Social Movements

When eminent talk show host and sociologist Studs Terkel asked Rosa Parks what the Highlander Center had to do with the fact that she chose not to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery, Alabama, on that fateful day in early December 1955, she answered quite simply, "*Everything!*"[1] Ms. Parks has said, "I found out for the first time in my adult life that this could be a unified society, that there was such a thing as people of differing races and backgrounds meeting together in workshops and living together in peace and harmony. I gained there strength to persevere in my work for freedom, not just for blacks but for all oppressed people."[2]

As a popular adult education residential center founded in Tennessee in 1932, the Highlander Research and Education Center played many important roles in the southern civil rights movement, from creating the citizenship school that enabled tens of thousands of southern blacks to learn to read and write, and hence be able to register to vote, to providing the leadership and organizational base for countless civil rights groups throughout the South—from the formation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to the introduction of *We Shall Overcome*, which became the anthem of the civil rights movement and continues to be sung around the world to this day.[3]

Many movement participants, including Andrew Young who went on to serve as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations and as mayor of Atlanta, have characterized the Highlander Center as the cradle of the southern civil rights movement. Indeed, it was the only place in the South where blacks and whites could meet and engage each other in dialogue and life as equals, which, for all intents and purposes, was against the law in Tennessee until the early 1970s. Highlander, the preeminent popular adult education center in the nation, was by principle and mission successfully engaged in working for a more just and equitable society with concerned people, including unions, throughout the South. Like the movement, it began with ordinary folks such as Rosa Parks, a seamstress; E. D. Nixon, a Pullman car porter; and Septima Clark, a schoolteacher; and enabled them to further realize their potential to accomplish extraordinary things and thus become true heroes.[4]

Less widely known is the important role Highlander played in connecting organized labor with the civil rights movement. As the principal union education center in the South during the '30s, '40s, and '50s, Highlander had contracts with many unions, including the powerful, all-black Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Its inspired leader, A. Philip Randolph, fervently believed that labor rights and larger social justice issues such as civil rights were intimately related.[5] Brotherhood steward E. D. Nixon learned many of his superb organizing skills and polished his strategic expertise at the Highlander Center with founder and director Myles Horton, and it was Nixon who had encouraged Rosa Parks to come with him to Highlander Center workshops in early 1955.[6]

Rosa Parks, a seamstress in a local department store, was also the secretary of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). When she was arrested for refusing to relinquish her seat on the bus to a white person, the first person she called was Nixon, who was not only a Pullman car porter and steward in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters but was also president of the Montgomery NAACP.

Nixon saw Parks's arrest as his long-awaited opportunity to initiate a bus boycott in Montgomery in an effort to end one of the degrading Jim Crow laws—a law that forced blacks to give up their seats to whites. He hoped the boycott would spark wider protests in the South to gain civil rights for black

Americans, building on *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court's 1954 decision that ruled segregated schools to be illegal.[7]

Martin Luther King Jr.; Pete Seeger; Claris Horton, daughter of Myles and Zilphia; Rosa Parks; and Ralph Abernathy at Highlander's 25th anniversary celebration, 1957.

Courtesy Highlander Center.

The following evening, Nixon held a meeting in a local church to organize a bus boycott, which gave birth to the now historic Montgomery bus boycott—the spark plug that ignited the long-brewing southern civil rights movement. The reverend at that church was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; that evening marked the beginning of his involvement in the nascent movement. Nixon also called his union president, A. Philip Randolph, whose contacts within and outside the labor movement enabled Nixon to raise the critical funds to build and sustain the boycott until its victory a year later.[8]

On Labor Day 1957, Martin Luther King met Ralph Helstein, international president of the United Packinghouse Workers Union, at Highlander's twenty-fifth anniversary celebration. Helstein's union immediately provided the critical startup funds for Dr. King's recently founded Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which became the hub of the southern civil rights movement.

Thus, the Highlander Center played a critical role in the civil rights movement not only by providing direct education and training that often led to new organizations and actions but also as a space to strategize, to organize action, to share scarce resources, and to bring like-minded white folks such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Ralph Helstein together with movement leaders.[9]

Principles of Popular Education

What then is this education that we typically call popular education today? Popular education is at its heart the empowerment of adults through democratically structured cooperative study and action, directed toward achieving more just, equitable, and peaceful societies. It seeks to build people's capacity to create democratic social change through education. Its priority is the poor, the oppressed, and the disenfranchised people of the world—ordinary people. In the words of Canadian popular educator Doris Marshall: "I want to see ordinary people all over the world feeling their own worth and seeing the same worth in other people. I want to see ordinary people taking responsibility for using what's left of the world's resources, together. This can not be done from the top down, but only by ordinary people, imbued with their own power."[10]

Courtesy: Highlander Center.

Progressive labor activists and leaders Myles Horton and Paulo Freire meet at the Highlander Center, 1987.

At rock bottom, there can be no popular education without a profound sense of equity, compassion, and generosity on the part of educators. Popular education rests on a lived faith that people have the capacity to come together collectively to solve their problems and have the right to be in control of decisions that affect their lives. Paulo Freire and Myles Horton speak of it as a genuine and active love of humankind. It is not a "skill" to be gained from books or traditional workshops but rather is rooted in one's essence, a state of being that can often develop from a process of intentional and continual transformation over time. The principal tool of popular education is authentic dialogue, which Brazilian educator Paulo Freire so eloquently defines and evokes in his classic work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.*[11] There are no set methods that are "popular education" but rather a collection of broad principles and a way of being in the world through which educators create and recreate methods and practices that are founded in equity, empathy, and compassion and strive to be suitable to each new situation.

Popular education can be a circle of rocking chairs at the Highlander Center, where people who face similar challenges in their many communities come together to engage in dialogue about their problems and to seek solutions and strategies. Or it can be people meeting in a parish church in a barrio in Brazil to form base communities to work, to understand, and to act to improve their conditions. Or it can be a group of people gathered in a living room in a Scandinavian country to form a study circle seeking and helping to enact just and equitable solutions to local, national, and global issues. Or some years ago it was African youth under the auspices of the black consciousness movement, created by the martyred Stephen Biko, gathered illegally and clandestinely to strive to become literate and to understand their world using popular education principles and practices. They studied under the leadership of Anne Hope, a courageous white South African nun who was exiled for many years for the literacy work that contributed to the overthrow of apartheid.[12]

Popular education cannot be static or fixed, nor can it be a mere set of exercises mechanically presented as an end in themselves; rather it must be creative, fluid, and forever shaping itself to new circumstances—with the people leading the way. The role of the popular educator is to bring people together, to facilitate the process until people can do it themselves; to articulate and enable the basic principles, especially by embodying them; to raise timely and critical questions; and to point people to resources when it is appropriate and when they are requested. Myles Horton captured the essence of the process in a few words: "The best education is action . . . and the best action is the struggle for social justice."[13]

Popular Education and Participatory Research

People engaged in education for social transformation invariably need to generate knowledge as part of their quest for a better world. One of the principal contributions of popular education to our common quest has been the development of participatory research, which is the result of the ongoing effort in popular education to come to grips, in both practice and theory, with the questions: what is knowledge, and what gives it standing in a society that aspires to be genuinely democratic? Participatory research also provides operant answers to these basic questions: how is knowledge to be produced, by whom, in whose interest, and to what end? It seeks a different organization of science in a democratic society, one in which knowledge is not simply for the people but created with and by the people as well. It authenticates ordinary people's knowledge and voices. It validates all persons' right to speak, however oppressed or subordinated they may be. In the words of Muhammad Anisur Rahman of Dakar, Bangladesh, participatory research seeks "to return to the people the legitimacy of the knowledge they are capable of producing through their own verification systems, as fully scientific, and the right to use this knowledge—including any other knowledge, but not dictated by it—as a guide in their own action."[14] The objective is social transformation toward more equitable, just, and peaceful democratic societies.

One salient example is the research jointly conducted by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia, the Highlander Center, and the Center for Science and the Environment in New Delhi in 1985, shortly after a leak of poisonous MIC gas from a Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, India, killed more than nineteen thousand people and left half a million more with permanent injuries.[15] These findings, developed in partnership with residents and Union Carbide workers in both Bhopal and Tennessee (which had a very similar Union Carbide plant), became the definitive and critical source of knowledge in petitioning for compensation and filing criminal charges in the wake of the worst industrial accident in history.

The Origins of Popular Education

What are the origins and roots of this critical form of education? One of popular education's strengths is that it has evolved virtually independently in many parts of the world. The important wellsprings of its recent evolution have been outside of the Eurocentric first world, especially in Latin America, inspired by and heavily indebted to the late Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire. Popular education has spread in significant part through the work of the Consejo de Educación de Adultos de América Latina (CEAAL) founded in Santiago, Chile, in the mid-1980s by educator and scholar Francisco vio Grossi.[16] Similarly, the world's leading center for participatory research is the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) in New Delhi, India, under the able leadership of Rajesh Tandon.[17] These far-flung organizations are part of a worldwide network, the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE).[18]

The term ***popular education*** comes from Latin America and the Spanish ***educación popular.*** Prior to the emergence of the names ***popular education*** and ***participatory research*** (the latter was coined with its present meaning in Tanzania in the early 1970s), these forms of education and research were often well developed in various parts of the world but were not named as such.[19] For example, the Highlander Center did not consistently refer to its pioneering work in the field by any label until the last decade or so when it began to use the terms ***popular education*** and ***participatory research*** more or less consistently.

Prior to the founding of the Highlander Center in 1932, the precursors of popular education in the United States can be found in the labor college movement. Workers in Scandinavia and Great Britain began to develop and control their own educational programs in the early twentieth century. After World War I, worker-soldiers, who had seen labor colleges in Europe, shared what they had seen with their brethren in the United States.[20]

In the 1920s and 1930s, the American labor college movement flourished with the establishment of more than three hundred colleges. The largest and best known of these colleges were Brookwood Labor College, established in Katonah, New York, in 1921; and Commonwealth College, founded in Mena, Arkansas, in 1925. The first Work People's College, however, was founded by the Finnish community of Duluth, Minnesota, in 1907. These colleges arose out of the inadequacy of the public schools and their failure to provide social mobility—about two-thirds of the students enrolled in the public schools at the time dropped out by the end of the fifth grade.[21] The Brookwood Bulletin (1932–33) puts it succinctly: "Brookwood thinks of the labor movement both as a practical instrument by which workers achieve higher wages, shorter hours, and better conditions of work, and as a great social force having as its ultimate goal the good life for all men in a social order free from exploitation and based on control by the workers. Brookwood frankly aims to inspire and train its students for activity in a militant labor movement."[22]

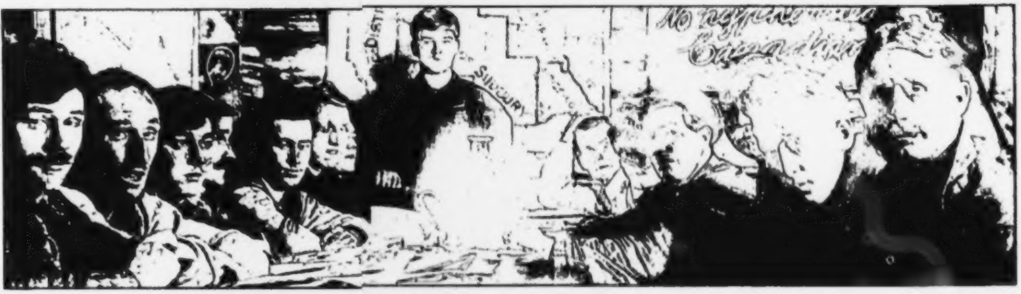
The colleges saw themselves as educating leaders for a new society, a vision shaped largely by the dynamic socialist movement of the day. Thus, the American labor colleges, in sharp contrast with the typical college, sought to facilitate fundamental social change on behalf of ordinary citizens.

These colleges came under sharp attack from conservatives, especially anticommunist and antilabor groups, which were a growing force at the time, and from the increasingly conservative American Federation of Labor. This opposition forced the colleges to close by the end of the 1930s.[23] In short, organized education that effectively opposed the status quo was not to be tolerated in the United States. Things have not changed much in the interim. Indeed, as several writers have described, the "education for social change" ethos characteristic of the workers' colleges and early workers' education movement was supplanted by a narrower education aimed at building and administering unions and engaging in collective bargaining with employers.[24]

The workers' education movement faired better in other countries. A unique worker education center, Frontier College, was established in Canada in 1899 and continues to flourish more than a century later, educating people bypassed by established institutions. The college implemented the *laborer-teacher* concept whereby teachers work and live side by side with their worker-students. They brought education and a call for social action to the Canadian frontier, working in remote logging camps and mines and with railroad gangs well into the 1950s. The laborer-teacher program continues to this day though primarily on large farms in the central provinces. Frontier College also runs a range of volunteer-based literacy programs across Canada.[25]

An early source of what we now call popular education can be found in the Workers' Education Association (WEA) founded in Great Britain in 1903. WEA used the term *popular education* as early as 1903 and focused on providing learning opportunities for those who were socially or economically disadvantaged. Today, it is the major national voluntary adult education organization in Britain, still run by its members and providing more than ten thousand courses a year through 650 local branches.

For more than one hundred years, people in Scandinavia have come together in study circles and folk high schools to investigate the conditions affecting their lives. For example, in Sweden there are now eleven study associations, including a Workers' Education Association, that together conduct more than 350,000 study circles every year with some three million participants. There are also 147 folk high schools, which reach about forty thousand people through courses that take place over a month or more, and about 150,000 people in shorter courses. Courses offered vary from folk dancing to serious and sustained study of global and state issues, such as a dialogue on whether or not to join the European Union.[26] It was the folk high school movement of Scandinavia, begun in Denmark



Courtesy Frontier College.

Lumber camp workers, in conjunction with Frontier College, take a class with a laborer-teacher, 1920.

in the mid-nineteenth century by Bishop Grundtvig, that provided the direct inspiration for Myles Horton to create the Highlander Folk School with a small group of friends in Tennessee in 1932, after he spent a year in Denmark visiting and working at various folk schools.[27]

In time, workers' education associations sprang up in many countries around the world, especially in Europe. They joined together in 1947 to form the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA), with its secretariat in Oslo, Norway. Its charter states its commitment to the principles of popular education: "Workers' education is there to help . . . persons find ways forward to act together for social justice. . . . The method of workers' education is based on confidence in people's wish and capacity to develop through participation in a collective effort . . . and the point of departure is people's actual situation and their knowledge and experience.[28]"

Popular Education Networks Confront Global Challenges

Formal and informal networks of educators and activists have played a critical role in the spread and development of popular education and participatory research throughout the world, especially in the Southern Hemisphere. The most central of these was the ICAE, which includes affiliated adult education organizations in more than one hundred nations. The ICAE in turn has facilitated a number of shifting global programs and networks, each independently established and coordinated from a different region of the world for various periods of time before being passed on to a new region. These have included Peace and Human Rights (Finland), Participatory Research (India), Women's Program (Canada), Literacy (St. Lucia, Caribbean), and Learning for Environmental Action (Brazil).[29]

In conclusion, labor, popular education, and social change have been critically interdependent for more than one hundred years in our long haul to create a more equitable, just, and sustainable world for all. If we substitute "popular educators" for "leaders" in the quote below from a famous Chinese philosopher, we are left with a simple but powerful description of a successful popular educator and an effort that attests to the antiquity and durability of popular education's central democratic principles.

> But of the best of leaders, when their task is accomplished
> and their work is done, the people all remark,
> "we have done it ourselves."
>
> —Lao Tzu, (570–497 B.C.)[30]

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[1] Frank Adams and Myles Horton, "Unearthing the Seeds of Fire: The Idea of Highlander" (Winston-Salem, N.C.: John F. Blair, 1975).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Dante J. James, "A. Philip Randolph: For Jobs and Freedom," dir. Dante James, 86 min., California Newsreel, 1996.

[6] Adams and Horton, "Unearthing the Seeds of Fire."

[7] Ibid.

[8] James, "A. Philip Randolph."

[9] Adams and Horton, "Unearthing the Seeds of Fire."

[10] Doris Marshall, *Silver Threads: Critical Reflections on Growing Old* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1987).

[11] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970).

[12] John Hurst, "Popular Education and the Fourth Biennial Congress on the Fate and Hope of the Earth," *Convergence* 22, no. 4 (1989). The congress took place June 5–9, 1989, Managua, Nicaragua.

[13] Myles Horton, *Bill Moyer's Journal: An Interview with Myles Horton: The Adventures of a Radical Hillbilly, Part I and Part II* (New Market, Tenn.: Highlander Research and Education Center, 1981): 248–285.

[14] Orlando Fals-Borda and Mohammad Anisur, eds., *Action and Knowledge: Breaking the Monopoly with Participatory Action Research* (New York: Apex Press, 1991).

[15] Anil Agarwal, Juliet Merrifield, and Rajesh Tandon, *No Place to Run: Local Realities and Global Issues of the Bhopal Disaster* (New Market, Tenn.: Highlander Research and Education Center, 1985).

[16] *Centros de Educación Popular de América Latina (CEAAL): Afiliados al Consejo de Educación de Adultos de América Latina* (Santiago, Chile: CEEAL, 1987).

[17] Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi, India, website http://www.pria.org.

[18] International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), Toronto, Canada, website http://www.web.net/~icae.

[19] Budd Hall, "From Margins to Center? Development and Purpose of Participatory Research," *The American Sociologist* 23, vol 4 (winter 1992): 15–28.

[20] Rolland G. Paulston, *Other Dreams, Other Schools: Folk Colleges in Social and Ethnic Movements* (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1980).

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

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[24] "The American Way in Labor Education," *Industrial Relations* 5, no. 2 (1966): 53–66; Joyce Kornbluh, *A New Deal for Workers Education: The Workers' Service Program 1933–42* (Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1988). Chapter one is especially useful in this book.

[25] James H. Morrison, *Camps & Classrooms: A Pictorial History of Frontier College* (Toronto: Frontier College Press, 1989), website http://www.frontiercollege.ca/english/main.htm.

[26] International Federation of Workers' Education Associations (IFWEA), Oslo, Norway, website http://www.ifwea.org.

[27] Myles Horton, "Grundtivig's Ideas in North America: Influences on Highlander Research and Education Center" (speech at 200th anniversary of Grundtvig's birth, Holte, Denmark, June 1983); Max Lawson, ed., *N.F.S. Grundtvig: Selected Educational Writings* (Denmark: International People's College, 1991).

[28] IFWEA website.

[29] ICAE website.

[30] Lao Tzu, *The Way of Life: Tao Te Ching*, trans. Raymond B. Blakney (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1955).

Courtesy Highlander Center.

Highlander and Labor: Building on the Past, Looking to the Future

By Susan Williams with Jim Sessions

> If real democracy is to be achieved, it will start with grassroots action. As diverse people respond to local circumstances, they must build broader movements which confront and change the policies and structures which dominate our lives. The power of the Highlander experience is the strength that grows within the souls of people, working together, as they analyze and confirm their own experiences and draw upon their understanding to contribute to fundamental change.[1]

The Highlander Folk School was founded in Monteagle, Tennessee, in 1932 to work for social and economic change.[2] Highlander's earliest campaigns were interwoven with the growth of union organizing in the South, from organizing bugwood tree cutters in Grundy County to coal miner organizing in Davidson and Wilder, Tennessee. During its first two decades, Highlander staff were sometimes organizers, like Zilla Hawes who worked with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers to organize the union's first local in the South. More often they were educators and cultural workers supporting union organizing and providing, as early as 1940, one of the only places in the South where blacks and whites could come together.

Workers' Experiences: Foundation for Organizing

The strength of Highlander's approach and the foundation of its education program is its emphasis on respecting working people's voices. Highlander staff worked with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and a variety of unions including the United Auto Workers (UAW), the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the American Federation of Hosiery Workers, the Textile Workers Union of America, and the United Mine Workers, among others. In addition to holding workshops at Highlander, Mary Lawrence Elkuss, head of Highlander's labor education extension program in the 1940s, traveled with other staff throughout eastern Tennessee to initiate education programs with many local unions. She described her philosophy in a 1945 handbook on union education: "Here are a few of the deep convictions my experiences in our community gave me: an educational program has to be built on personal knowledge of a given situation and the people involved (i.e. you must know their problems and their capabilities); an educational program must be built on their experiences and not on your own theories (for instance, you do not throw in a labor history course because *you* think they should know labor history); an educational program will be accepted eagerly if it is simple, clear, dynamic, and practical."[3]

Courtesy Highlander Center.

Highlander Center logo.

More recently, former Highlander Director Jim Sessions described how Highlander staff drew out workers' experiences, using a popular education approach to build solidarity as the basis for successful organizing.

> Some of the workers who came to Highlander [when I was there] were not accustomed to sitting in meetings and speaking out publicly. In a workshop you were supposed to appear smart or eloquent or articulate or analytical. That's frightening and intimidating for lots of people, and especially where we worked in southern Appalachia. So we started with something people felt comfortable with, just telling stories and swapping yarns to build trust and to look for an opening to a personal experience that's going to be relevant to everybody. . . . Once you got them to finally open up and talk about what they cared about for their families, and what they hated about their jobs . . . then the organizers could build a campaign around what people felt strongly about.

> What you might call popular education or peer learning is the basis of solidarity. A campaign is not going to win without it. We've seen campaigns fail because there was not that solidarity among the rank and file. The reason is that the campaign was never built on what the workers really cared about. And organizing that is not built on solid education and leader development is going to be failed organizing. So they're together, but they're not the same. One has to lead to the other or it's not any good, and one that tries to do it without the other is going to fail. Education and organizing need each other. [4]

Highlander workshops on union issues were designed to challenge and enlarge workers' vision, and skills-building workshops included activities of immediate practical value such as public speaking and journalism. The popular education approach at Highlander was more than a methodology; rather, it was a political way of working with people to build democracy and fight social and economic inequities. That democracy started in the classroom. Workers described a course on union problems taught by Myles Horton at the Highlander Center during a five-week education term in 1939: "It was in this class that we actually thrashed out and tried to get answers to the immediate serious problems that confront us all in our local unions. Everyone had the right to stand up and ask any question that might concern the organization of workers. Myles would then throw the floor open for discussion."[5]

The Role of Culture

Highlander's early workshops also included cultural work such as drama and singing led by staffperson Zilphia Horton. Mary Lawrence Elkuss described workers' response to these workshops: "At Highlander during the regular six-week terms, one of the most exciting courses has been dramatics taught by Zilphia Horton. Of course, the students turn up their noses in disdain when they first come. They all have preconceived opinions of dramatics, and they aren't very flattering. But when they find that no learning of lines or putting on dull plays is involved, just living out their own experiences, they fall for it like a ton of bricks."[6]

The plays, written during educational workshops, were sometimes taken on the road to picket lines and to local union halls. Zilphia Horton herself went to numerous picket lines with song sheets and encouraged workers to be song leaders in their union locals, at meetings, and on the picket lines, and to develop songs based on their own experiences. She collected and shared songs, including "We Shall Overcome" which she learned from food and tobacco workers who brought it to Highlander, and the song below, which she included in a book of labor songs she compiled for the Textile Workers' Union.

There's a Union that we know of and it grows from day to day,
and its' spirit will inspire us as we come to learn the way.
We will organize all workers on a basis firm and strong,
make this world a place far better and remove the system's wrong.

'Tis a task that calls for courage, we're preparing now to do,
and the spirit of our fighters asks the best from me and you;
for the road ahead is stormy e'er we gain the victory,
but prepare to do your duty and we'll set all workers free.[7]

Changing Times, Enduring Principles

Throughout its history, Highlander has stayed true to its principle to work for social change, even if that meant defying the political order of the day. In 1949 Highlander broke with the CIO when it used red-baiting policies to expel some unions with which Highlander was working. And, during the McCarthy period, Highlander was blacklisted by the AFL-CIO. While Highlander continued education work with some unions, others developed their own programs.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Highlander's major focus shifted to supporting the burgeoning civil rights movement in the South. Highlander was uniquely positioned to link workers' rights and broader civil rights, as John Hurst describes in a related paper in this chapter. Highlander was instrumental in educating black union activists who then became leaders in the civil rights movement and played a critical role connecting progressive unions with civil rights leaders. The state of Tennessee did not look favorably on Highlander's activities, closing it down and revoking its charter in 1961.

The Highlander Center Today

Yet the Highlander Center didn't die. It returned as the Highlander Research and Education Center, moving first to Knoxville, Tennessee, and then to its current location in New Market, Tennessee, in 1971. With this move, Highlander again focused on labor issues in the Appalachian region. Through the next several decades staff worked with the United Mine Workers to support the Brookside, Blue Diamond, and Pittston strikes and backed mine workers in their struggle to obtain benefits for black lung disease. Highlander built on its long history of work with clothing and textile workers, providing educational, cultural, and safety and health workshops for union members from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) and supporting the struggle for a contract at J.P.

Stevens.[8] Highlander also helped launch the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network, described by Susan Williams later in this book, and provides ongoing resources for the Knoxville area Jobs with Justice chapter.

As the new century begins, we face the daunting challenge of organizing large numbers of unorganized workers in this region. We must work together to build cross-race alliances to confront employer tactics of using new immigrant workers to keep wages low and increase racial divisions. A popular education approach will be crucial for the organizing process to be successful and for long-term change to occur. The words of Paul Christopher, Tennessee regional CIO director in 1945, are still true today: "New unions do not become established unions without workers' education. The need for a continuing simple program of basic education in the everyday problems a local union must meet and overcome is demonstrated by the long list of local unions that 'used to be'."[11]

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[1] For the Highlander mission statement, see the website at http://www.highlandercenter.org/.

[2] Founders were Myles Horton, Don West, Jim Dombrowski, and John Thompson.

[3] Mary Lawrence, *Education Unlimited—A Handbook on Union Education in the South* (Monteagle, Tenn.: Highlander Folk School, April 1945), 9. Lawrence later went on to work as a labor educator with the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' Union. She married Bill Elkuss and is referred to in this article as Mary Lawrence Elkuss.

[4] Sessions, transcript of a popular education workshop held at the SAJE House, Los Angeles, December 2001. Jim Sessions was director of Highlander from 1993 to 1999.

[5] "We the Students" (Highlander Research and Education Center archives, 1935, mimeographed).

[6] Lawrence, *Education Unlimited*, 37.

[7] To the tune of "Springtime in the Rockies," Zilphia Horton, comp., *Labor Songs* (Highlander Research and Education Center archives, n.d.).

[8] In 1976 the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the Textile Workers merged to form the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), which merged in 1995 with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) to form the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE!).

[9] Lawrence, *Education Unlimited*, 3.

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Organizing

Chapter
2

Courtesy Servidores Publicos Unidos/AFSCME.

Organizing Public Sector Workers in Puerto Rico: An Interview with José La Luz and Annette González

By Linda Delp and Miranda Outman-Kramer
Translated by Angeles Sancho

In November 2001, eight thousand workers in Puerto Rico's Departamento de Familia (Social Services Department) voted to unionize with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).This important victory contributed to the recent increase in unionized workers in Puerto Rico—from 5 percent in 1998 to more than 14 percent in 2002.[1] Servidores Públicos Unidos/AFSCME now represents 22,500 workers in eleven newly organized locals.[2]

Annette González is a case manager in the Departamento de Familia and president of Local 3234 representing the eight thousand workers in her department. We interviewed her and José La Luz, executive director of Servidores Públicos Unidos/AFSCME.

Linda Delp: What were some of the challenges you faced during the organizing campaign?

José La Luz: In Puerto Rico, where I have been for the past six and a half years, one of the critical challenges that we face in organizing and building a union of public service workers continues to be divisions among workers who have deeply rooted loyalties to different political parties. Workers in Puerto Rico, particularly in the highly politicized public service, are easily divided and turn into adversaries. This is especially true as the three parties intensify political campaigns during elections.[3] But politics is also a constant activity in Puerto Rico, making it very difficult to bring people together to work toward a common goal such as building a union. In this situation the union has to be put together by men and women of different political and ideological allegiances.

Most of the public agencies have party delegates or operatives. These are not official positions, rather people who recruit public sector workers to the political party, who gather them for political rallies, fundraisers, and other activities. Party members remain connected to the political party and reap the rewards. For instance many of the men and women who participate in these activities are given the possibility to get pay increases, which are supposed to be given on the basis of merit but most often have more to do with how many fundraising activities and how many votes the person was able to mobilize for the political party. The party in power often promotes its delegates to managerial or supervisory positions, so they have a lot of influence at the workplace.

It's a system that does not have a counterpart on the United States mainland. In urban centers where this used to be the experience, like Chicago or New York City, that system has now become defunct, to a large extent because workers organized through unions. In Puerto Rico we're still dealing with this situation, so popular education for us has been very, very helpful in our approach to organizing. It allows workers to examine how it is that they actually don't reap any rewards and that in essence they remain divided and weak. The only way for them to change this is to build unity and to become active protagonists of their own change.

Annette González: As workers we have been working on this process for about six years. In Puerto Rico there was very little union culture. One of the most important challenges was to break with the *bonafide*, a civil service association that had been in the agency for twenty-five or twenty-six years and that didn't educate the workers or help them to get power. The leader of this organization became a *caudillo* (boss). He was the only person who could make decisions, and workers were unaware of what was happening.

When Servidores Públicos came to the Departmento de Familia, bringing a philosophy that workers have power in their hands, we fought against that person so that he would get out of our way and would let us fight for labor justice. One of the most difficult things was that he somehow allied himself with the management and he tried to make our lives more difficult. But we were able to win. We demonstrated to him that we didn't want that kind of power anymore; we wanted to control the situation. I think it was also difficult because their campaign was very negative, very dirty. They tried to damage our image and to diminish what we had achieved. But we did it with the truth; we did it with heart, so that all those things were finally eliminated. We were able to win the battle.

Linda: What is your job in the Departamento de Familia?

Annette: I am a caseworker (*manejadora de caso*) in the Nutritional Assistance Program (a food stamps

Courtesy Servidores Publicos Unidos/AFSCME

Small group activity to discuss a union organizing campaign in Puerto Rico.

program) of the Departmento de Familia. We in the government agencies have very bad working conditions. The workload is so bad it is hard to bear. And public employee salaries are at poverty level.

There are lots of problems, because we work with the community, with many families that are disintegrating. When we go to remove minors often we receive threats. Our lives are at risk, and we don't have any kind of safety. In some offices we have mice, water leaks, fungi in the ceilings. There are not even adequate chairs to sit on; we have ergonomic problems. We don't have equipment for the computer system. We have to buy pens, notebooks, paper to do our jobs.

Linda: Did you get support from the general public and the community when you were organizing?

Annette: Yes, because we work with the community. The Department of Family gives benefits—economic and psychological—to families in Puerto Rico; and because that's our job we are always in contact with the community. We participated in many radio shows where people could communicate with us, and they were telling us that they understood that our working conditions were not good and that prevented us from giving better service to them. This is a chain; if we are not well we won't be able to offer good services and the social help they need.

Linda: I imagine that the agencies might have tried to divide you as workers and also divide you from the community.

Annette: The agency tried by means of politics. On one occasion they called most of the committee leaders for interviews to promote us to managerial positions. None of us accepted those positions, because we already had an awareness of where we were going. We preferred promotions for which we had fought, not promotions that would denigrate us as workers and as human beings.

Linda: How did AFSCME initiate its organizing campaign in Puerto Rico?

José: In 1998 after four decades of at least forty failed bills, a law was passed giving public sector workers the right to organize and to bargain collectively. But even before that we began to organize ourselves little by little, in small groups of workers. Everything started in the agency where Annette works, the Department of Family, an agency of Human and Social Services in Puerto Rico. In 1995 a group of fifty workers attended a meeting and there they presented the problems they were confronting. The agency workers decided that the time had come to get organized in a union and to gain the right to negotiate, and the rest is history.

Annette: This campaign has been very important to me. As a woman, as a worker, and now as the president of the local. Here in Puerto Rico, as José was saying, politics are rampant. Inside the government agencies politics dominate most actions that can be taken. In order to get promotions and salary raises, everything has to go through the political parties. Servidores Públicos Unidos of AFSCME taught us, the workers in Puerto Rico, that we don't have to work for the political party. The political party and the legislators have to work for the workers' welfare.

AFSCME did a series of trainings about all this, and that's when the focus began to shift. We started to demand that our rights be respected and to demand a law allowing us to unionize. We still have the hope of amending it, of making it better. Because now they have heard our voice; not a whisper but a strong voice. Now we are in that process—we are being heard and respected.

Linda: I imagine it hasn't been easy to change attitudes, to insist that the government has to work for you instead of the opposite. How did you try to change that way of thinking?

Annette: Well, education. Education has been very important. AFSCME brought us, the workers, a popular education program. With various trainings, sociodramas (role-plays), and other forms of carrying the message, we were taught how to organize ourselves as a group, how to carry a clear message that is easy to digest, not too academic.

José: The kind of passionate, confrontational, partisan politics—which are fundamental to the structure of Puerto Rican public agencies—can only be overcome if people are able to explore through popular education: How is it that the parties have gained so much power? Why is it that they don't want to share? And why is it that they feel threatened by workers coming together to build unions? Workers coming together will result in an independent source of power that eventually will challenge and diminish the immense power that these political parties have over everything from workers' ability to obtain a job to their ability to remain in it. Demystifying these political parties' power has become one of our major educational challenges and has inspired many of the techniques we use.

Linda: José, could you explain more about the educational program that was part of the organizing campaign?

José: We used popular education, not just "classroom" activities but those from daily life. Those offer opportunities to learn. We can make people reflect, analyze what's happening. We build on a long tradition. Popular education has been practiced widely in South and Central America—particularly in Brazil—based on the work of Paulo Freire; by other adult, popular, and worker educators in South Africa; and right here in our country [the United States] at places like the Highlander Center in the 1930s, '40s, and '50s.

As popular educators we try to engage in what we call "the collective construction of knowledge," where there is not going to be an expert, there is not going to be an academic authority, someone who knows everything. Rather, the point of departure is the experience and the knowledge that each one of the participants—each worker in this case—brings. Instead of relying on the so-called expert knowledge to provide all the learning, the people who participate, both the students and the teacher, are learning with and about each other and building knowledge together. Knowledge that is the result of their life experience is critical. It's important. It's validated.

Because with worker-centered learning, people who participate are the subject and not the object of the education experience, many of the educational activities begin by developing a sense of who we are: the people, the men and women who are participating, the communities that they come from, their educational backgrounds, their gender, their race. In Puerto Rico, as in many islands in the Caribbean, you have a mix of people who came as colonizers from Spain or France or the Netherlands or Great Britain or any other former empire; the indigenous people who survived genocide (many people were exterminated); and of course the people who were brought in chains from Africa to perform slave labor. So exploring the racial biases, which in many instances people want to deny, becomes important.

Also we look at their particular jobs and whether they require a lot of "accumulated" or "academic" knowledge. Divisions exist in the workplace because of the notion that those who have gone to higher learning institutions are better than those workers who were not able to attend them. We've found that in many instances people who did not get the chance to obtain a so-called academic or scientific education are still required to perform duties that put them on more or less equal terms with the people who have obtained degrees. For instance in the social and human service agencies there is an artificial division between the so-called technicians who have enormous caseloads and the social workers who are the so-called professionals by virtue of having a graduate degree.

Linda: Can you describe some of the methods or activities you've used?

José: I have used a number of techniques, including sociodramas, and an exercise called the "tree of power." One focus of the activities was to try to demystify the power of the political party. I have found sociodrama useful because it allows workers to learn by doing and to critique it once they have gone through it. Other people who perhaps did not participate in the drama itself are also asked to listen, observe, and record their impressions in order to discuss them as a group and to learn together with the others. Sociodrama allows people to witness something with their own eyes and ears; and as a result it is an opportunity for critical thinking to develop. It helped to illustrate what it meant to be subordinated to a party, as in the case of the government agency that Annette spoke about. Everybody depended fundamentally on the party: it was the source of power to get a job, to get a raise or a promotion, to obtain merit to rise in rank—that is to say, everything.

One of the most effective popular educators I have seen is Yolanda Medina, a colleague who works here in AFSCME's department of education and has organized many of the activities we used in the campaign. Another one who has participated in many educational activities and has been a Freirian educator for many years is Carlos Alas Santiago. Educators like Santiago and Medina used sociodrama to analyze how this power dynamic is played out in the agency and to achieve a "collective construction of knowledge."

For example in the agency it was often necessary to ask the party delegates for permission to do things. I remember that at the beginning, when we started to organize, we had to ask them for permission to enter some of the offices. Sociodramas were used to start analyzing who has the power in this situation, why the political party doesn't want to share the power with the worker, why it is important that the worker has power. Despite the pervasiveness of political power in many instances people refused to acknowledge that it was responsible for people obtaining a job in the first place. In our activities some of the participants were asked to play the role of the political operative, to illustrate the power of the parties and how systemic that power was in the government agencies.

Popular educators are also social communicators. The very language the popular educator uses in his/her message is important in demystifying a power structure—the power of the political party in this case. For example we use the term *gorrita* metaphorically to describe the political parties. Then people can see it—it's like a baseball cap that's blue, or red, or green, and when you use the term or wear a cap that's a specific color, everyone knows you're referring to that specific political party.

"The power tree" allows people to explore the sources and the uses of power and how power is developed, who actually has the power, who controls the power, and for what purposes. I've also used exercises that popular educators call "naming the moment," so that people are able to practice identifying what are the main characteristics of the specific historical juncture we are experiencing in order to understand how to transform it.[4] The purpose of all of these activities is to be able to allow the participants to examine their reality, which is always changing, because the only constant is change. And these are educational, pedagogical experiences I think we need to continue doing. Popular education is a constant process of learning and of construction of knowledge.

Linda: Annette, could you think of a specific education session when you realized something very important or that was an important moment for you? Could you explain how this worked?

Annette: There have been several important moments. It was about internalizing our reality. When we started the sociodramas Carlos Alas, who is a professor at the University of Puerto Rico, brought the message. What we saw was our own reality: this is what you are living. Perhaps we, as workers in a government public agency, had become accustomed to the political party controlling all the benefits that we supposedly had: relocation, salary increase, ranking steps based on merit, good working conditions, adequate chairs. Maybe we thought that it was a normal thing that the political party controlled these things.

Then, all this kind of popular education came and made us face the situation that we were living and internalize that it wasn't right. We started to realize that the political party is using us like puppets and that we needed to reverse the roles, because we give them our vote and make it possible for them to be there. It has been important to know how to reach the coworkers, how to dare to carry a message and create a collective, the way to do those things correctly, and how to make your coworkers trust you—to make a group, to be a leader.

In Puerto Rico, union culture had always been dominated by men. The vision of AFSCME is very different; it is more egalitarian, and women began to play an important role. We started our struggle as women, to have a place in the union arena. To be able to fight just like men had fought, without diminishing men—because they have done a great job and we continue to work together. But we saw that women could raise their voices. In Puerto Rico there is a lot of *machismo*, because it is Latin American, right? And that was hard to break. But AFSCME brought that kind of vision and philosophy, and we continue to learn.

Linda: Could you tell me about the first time you realized you could play an important role within the union as a woman and as a leader?

Annette: Many years ago I was a delegate from my workplace to a general assembly, I think in 1996, in Cagua; I had never attended an assembly. And when I heard José speaking to the group of about a thousand people I saw myself as part of the group. I saw that there was a long way ahead of us, but that the fact that I was there—it was like the beginning of something important. I will never forget José's words. He explained that the power and strength was in the worker, that only the workers united could reach the labor justice that we had always dreamt of. I heard all that, and that he believed in us and that we were going to achieve it. José has a phrase. . . . How is it, José?

José: *Encima, si se puede, arriba los de abajo* (On top, yes we can, raise up those on the bottom). Those are the slogans of the three parties. *Encima* (on top) is from the Popular Democratic party, *sí se puede* (yes, we can) is used by the New Progressive party, and *arriba los de abajo* (raise up those on the bottom) is from the Independent party. We combined these slogans to convey that we are all from different parties but as workers united we can't let ourselves be divided by any party.

Courtesy Servidores Publicos Unidos/AFSCME.

AFSCME members at a training workshop in Puerto Rico.

Linda: And now?

Annette: That was, as I told you, the beginning. We are achieving our goal. It hasn't been easy. But we have united and talked about our problems at work and now it is not a problem of fighting in the corner of some office. We have raised our voice, written a letter, met with the highest official in the department. We have exposed everything, written reports, talked to the media. It's no longer that we continue to work here because we need to make a living and have no choice. We now know that we deserve better conditions, and we have the freedom and the confidence to say it.

José: They have had actions that paralyzed several working centers and have made the employer come and, in many cases, fix things. For example, do you remember, Annette, that problem with the air conditioning in Riopiedra? It was out of service, and you all, with the strike, made the Secretary herself show up; and they had to fix it. They have taken many direct actions as a result of reflection on and analysis of the situation. I would agree with Annette that before this wasn't done in an organized, systematic way.

Annette: I started my job in 1992 and still work there eight hours every day. In February it will be ten years. But more important than that are the five years that I've been working with Servidores Públicos. Really, I have learned a lot. Our values as workers and our vision of what we deserve has grown stronger. Now I'm the president of Local 3234, which represents eight thousand workers.

Now we are negotiating the contract. We are training a diverse negotiating committee with people from different units, including clerical and social workers. We want to bring a working team that is well prepared so that we can achieve one of the best collective agreements.

Linda: What role has education played in this phase after winning the election?

Annette: Education is still a priority for us. We have learned that we need to unite people. We offer trainings every other week: trainings on how to organize, how to win elections, how to fight against negative campaigns. We are almost constantly training, and with this type of education people internalize their situation. They can understand and fight with basic tools they've acquired. When they see their reality, when they see what they are living and how they can improve it, the way to do it gets easier. I think that education has been the basis for all this.

Linda: Looking back over the last few years, what was the most important success?

Annette: To win the elections! And that was a big struggle. It was tears, to be there for the recounting of votes at the work commission. José wasn't there—he was nervous and stayed in the office waiting for us. One of the most important moments was to be able to tell the media that we, the workers, had won, and to know that they published it. And to hear the joy of the workers, because we had finally made it. That was one of the greatest things, one of the most beautiful things I have lived.

AFSCME has been very important for us. We learned about solidarity among workers of all the agencies. We learned what it means to be united in a collective, to have not just individual power but collective power to gain benefits for everybody, which can generate benefits for the community as well, for the society we live in. This process has also been important because we have broken many barriers here in Puerto Rico. When power is not in small groups anymore, then democracy is true democracy.

Note: Servidores Públicos Unidos/AFSCME Local 3234 is now negotiating its first contract. In October of 2002, Servidores Públicos Unidos/AFSCME held its founding convention, bringing the eleven newly organized locals into one AFSCME Council in Puerto Rico.

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[1] Puerto Rico Department of Labor, 2002

[2] Servidores Públicos Unidos/AFSCME has organized workers into eleven new locals since 1998 when a collective bargaining law for Puerto Rican public sector workers went into effect. In addition to those in the Social Services Department, workers represented include those in the Departments of Education, Natural Resources, Transportation, Correction, and others. To date, they have negotiated four first contracts and are currently negotiating contracts for the other locals as they continue to organize other workers.

[3] The three parties in Puerto Rico are: the Popular Democratic Party (currently in power), the New Progressive Party, and the Puerto Rican Independence Party.

[4] For more information, see Deborah Barndt, *Naming the Moment: Political Analysis for Action* (Toronto: The Moment Project, Jesuit Centre for Social Faith, 1989). Available through the Catalyst Centre; see Resources in this publication.

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Courtesy Jane McAlevey.

Stamford, Connecticut, Case Study: The Whole Worker Movement

By Jane McAlevey

This essay is about a recent organizing campaign in Fairfield County, Connecticut. The Union Organizing Project was an experiment in many respects, bringing together two traditions: union organizing and community-based organizing. In the end, it's a story of successes that stemmed from a hybrid organizing model that reshaped worker identity from isolated worker, to worker-union-member, to worker–union-member–leader, to worker–union-member–churchgoer–leader, to worker–union-member–churchgoer–tenants-rights-advocate–leader.

The campaign took place primarily among low-income workers in one of the wealthiest counties in the United States. Workers were struggling not only with falling wages but with rising housing costs and a systemic lack of respect. The model we used stemmed from an all-odds-against-us power structure in which we had to forge a mass-based organizing campaign in order to win. That meant creating a broad culture of resistance to oppression. The workers and poor people in the campaign benefited not only from the concrete victories, of which there were many, but from the very nature of a multi-union campaign that involved a major fight to defend public and affordable housing.[1] The result was that during every moment in the three-year campaign, we, as a group of workers and poor people, were engaged in intense fights on many fronts. Fights we started and fights that ended in victories.

In the three years from 1998 to 2001:

- Some 4,500 workers (public sector, health care, childcare, taxicab drivers, and janitors) joined unions, all with successful first contracts.
- Four public housing projects slated for demolition were saved.

- The Stamford City Council passed the nation's strongest one-for-one replacement ordinance, protecting thousands of units of affordable public housing.
- Some $15 million in new state funds were secured to help pay for improvements in the same public housing complexes.
- The city passed an inclusionary zoning policy mandating minimum numbers of affordable units per new development.
- An African American woman was elected to the school board for the first time in Stamford history.
- Union-led electoral campaigns put two new rank-and-file members into the city council, including the first Latina, or for that matter the first member ever of Latin American descent.
- Thousands of workers and religious leaders' lives were transformed.

How did we accomplish this? The campaign was based on important leadership development principles: (1) We started from the workers' own experiences, addressing issues of concern to them such as housing and not just focusing on workplace concerns; (2) we integrated a critical analysis of the power structure into early education and planning, starting from what workers already knew about their own quality of life (i.e., cost of housing, access to good schools) and then adding information identified through research; and (3) the goal of all worker education was collective action for social change—skills training was done so workers could interview other workers or talk to ministers, the boss, or the media about the campaign.

Background

In 1998, one of a handful of experimental projects initiated by the AFL-CIO's new national organizing department was launched in Fairfield County, Connecticut. Initially called the Stamford Organizing Project and later renamed the Union Organizing Project to reflect a broader geography, the campaign was charged with seeking ways to increase union organizing drive successes and to accelerate obtaining first contracts.[2] Unique to this project was its multi-union character. It was initially launched with the United Auto Workers (UAW) Region 9A1, the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 371, the Hotel and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 217, and the New England Health Care Employees Union District 1199/Service Employees International Union (SEIU). By the campaign's middle stage, the UFCW was no longer part of the campaign and SEIU building services Local 531 had joined.

When the Union Organizing Project began, District 1199 and the UAW had just organized a shop apiece, adding 120 nursing home and 580 city workers as union members. It was clear from the outset that the first real test would be to deliver first contracts for these unions, fast.

Power Structure Analysis

At one of our first meetings with UAW and 1199 members, we initiated a power structure analysis (PSA) designed in part to engage workers as leaders in the strategic development of a campaign.[3] The PSA investigates critical questions:

Who are the powerful forces?

On what does their power rest?

What are their vulnerabilities?

Which forces would be allies and which obstacles?

How could we enhance the power of our friends and neutralize that of our opponents?

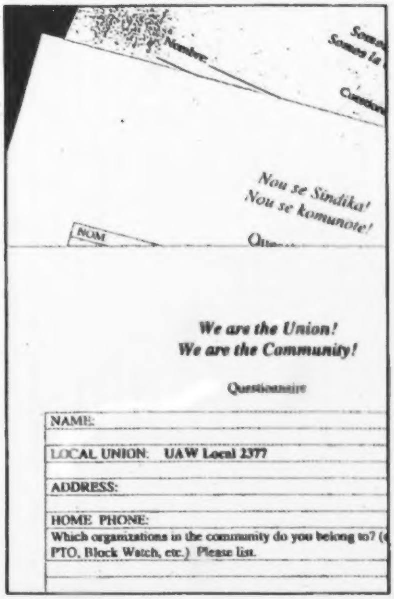
The PSA is the brainchild of Anthony Thigpenn, a longtime community organizer and political campaign director in Los Angeles.[4] The brilliance of the PSA is that it measures power two ways, first in absolute terms, and second in relation to goals, agenda, vision, and values. Even more important, it can function as a popular education approach to help groups meet political education and collective planning goals.

From that very first meeting, pieces of the PSA began to come together. Many of the new UAW members worked in the main city government building. They had unique understandings of city government and unique access to the workings of local power. The health care workers offered sharp insights into another important element in the local power structure: which churches mattered, which ministers mattered, and what the relationships were between them.

While more traditional research is crucial to a PSA, participatory research methods to learn about the experiences of workers through meetings and one-on-one interviews with key players are just as important.[5] A PSA can be an irreplaceable development tool when used to its maximum potential, involving whole groups of workers in real-world surveys that not only provide unique leadership training but turn up strategic information more conventional research would miss. In our PSA, we began by asking workers to discuss their quality of life in Fairfield County. What issues affected their ability to raise their children and live with dignity?

Beyond the Workplace: Housing and Schools Matter

The results were stunning. Across the board, workers identified housing as overshadowing all other aspects of their quality of life. Low wages made it difficult to pay the rent, and the idea of purchasing a home was not even on their radar screens. Workers also raised serious concerns about the declining quality and resegregation of public schools. Even though the city had a bussing program, it was always the black kids from downtown who were bussed for more than an hour to North Stamford to attend rich, white, well-funded schools.[6]



Somos la

Nombre:

Nou se Sindika!
Nou se komunote!

NOM

We are the Union!
We are the Community!

Questionnaire

NAME:

LOCAL UNION: **UAW Local 2377**

ADDRESS:

HOME PHONE:

Which organizations in the community do you belong to? (
PTO, Block Watch, etc.) Please list.

A worker survey, done in three languages, was used to identify union members' relationships with the larger community.

Courtesy Jane McAlevey.

From that meeting we learned that even if we could get workers into a union and make real gains in terms of wages, health care, and pensions, Stamford workers would still face an uphill battle in terms of their overall quality of life. No matter what we won in concrete wage gains, housing costs alone would condemn these workers to poverty conditions. We also learned about the near total lack of power that any person or institution aligned with working-class residents and people of color possessed.

Wealth, Power, and Racism

This was an area where not just any corporate power, but Fortune 500 global corporate power, ruled. Fairfield County, Connecticut, is among the wealthiest regions of the nation. During the three years under discussion, the area median income went from $83,400 to $108,400.

In the late 1960s, millions of federal government dollars were made available to cities for "urban redevelopment" as part of the antipoverty programs of the era. Stamford was one of the few cities where a single developer got a monopoly on urban redevelopment funds, and the city was able to push forward a "redevelopment" scheme. Small-town Stamford was transformed into a major Fortune 500 corporate headquarters region. This coincided with white flight from urban areas, which drew business and jobs from the urban core.

Redevelopers encountered an obstacle, however, in the acres of prime land filled with low-income, tenement-style housing whose residents were African American. As a result, the homes of more than five thousand black people (eleven hundred families) were bulldozed to pave the way for the fourteen global Fortune 500 companies that now call the area home.

These companies held absolute political power and a more diffuse social power, having long ago convinced members of the general population that they should be thankful to corporations for providing jobs and a "cleaned-up city."

Race and racism were just under the surface, part of an unspoken understanding that people of color would be left alone as long as they kept to "their side of the street." The handful of times that

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people of color had come together to make demands that even acknowledged racism, their leaders were dismissed and their demands ignored.

The area was unique in Connecticut in that there was no organized independent power base with which we could ally ourselves; no local universities from which to tap students who might be concerned about social justice; no major community-based groups of any kind except conservative neighborhood groups that generally supported the agenda of the elites; and a handful of social service providers who were opposed to a real antipoverty strategy that had as a centerpiece winning wage improvements through organizing unions.

Strategies to Address the Power Imbalance

The PSA had given us an assessment of what we were up against. To win against such an extreme power imbalance, we would have to:

- Find creative ways to expose the real corporate agenda. Conventional union campaigns would not be sufficient given the local population's lack of contact with the modern labor movement except as projected in the mainstream media.
- Align a race and class agenda to win the allies we needed since almost all the workers we were organizing were people of color.
- Help organize and mobilize the only potential institutional ally with even a possibility of power: religious institutions, specifically black churches, everything from evangelical Haitian storefronts to the largest Baptist congregations.
- Make our emerging rank-and-file base the key to making friends in the local community. We were very conscious of the fact that none of the original campaign staff was from the area.

Prior to the Union Organizing Project, no organization had the resources or analytical ability to produce the necessary research concerning housing destroyed as corporations moved in, who was displaced from the city in which stages, how severe the crisis had become, and most importantly, that the corporations had a new plan to take down the remaining low-income units.

Crucially, our research taught us that as a final stage in the refashioning of Stamford, the city planned to bulldoze and demolish all the remaining affordable housing—both federal and state-subsidized public housing complexes, which were scattered across the small section of the city's downtown area that had not been covered in shiny office towers.

We recognized that if we wanted the black ministers to help us we needed to respond to their concerns. That required not only educating workers as workers but educating the general public about the history of the housing crisis and about how it was about to become considerably worse. Because we were the first organization in the city to sound the alarm about the second wave of demolition, we were able to establish unions as a force for good in the city with the very base we sought to organize.

Building Community Ties

As part of the leadership development process, we brought in a team of worker-leaders from each union to survey workers in the areas where we were facing tough first contract fights. These first surveys asked simple questions such as, where their children attended school, what religious institution they were affiliated with if any, were they part of any community groups, did they vote, and so on. We did a joint training, using role-plays to practice how to complete the surveys.

After several weeks, we began to analyze the results to see what we might have in terms of community ties. Religious institutions were the most obvious. Once we had broken down the worker list by church, we overlaid the information with what we had learned from the PSA about which churches or religious leaders were powerful. We prioritized church leaders explicitly by power. We ignored the more obvious church leaders inclined to be progressive by tradition (Unitarians or Congregationalists) in favor of churches where a large number of our workers attended the services, and where we had assessed through the PSA that the minister had some power.

We developed worker teams by church. One or two workers per church agreed to request a meeting with their minister, not as union leaders but as congregants. The message they brought to these meetings was "help us get a contract, not because you believe in unions but because you believe in me as a member of your congregation, and because you know my family suffers." Both the message and the messengers were far outside the more traditional rent-a-collar approach in which unions call on religious leaders for their support during press conferences or other high-profile events rather than building long-term relationships by involving union members.

By our fifth month in Stamford, we began to organize 1199 and UAW rank-and-file members by church and to hold weekend leadership sessions, addressing workers as churchgoers. Participants developed an implicit consciousness at these Saturday sessions as they realized they now shared two things: they had recently voted to join a union and needed a contract, and they attended the same church. In the pews, these workers now knew each other in the context of their struggle as workers.

Tense union organizers, nervous about getting contracts, fidgeted about the slowness of the process. But we stuck to the model of first surveying workers, then bringing them into the office for evening and weekend trainings across unions, and finally meeting with every church leader where we had five or more members willing to go together.

The strategy paid off. At our very first church meeting the minister (who happened to lead the largest and most prestigious black congregation in the city) agreed to write to Stamford Mayor

Courtesy Jane McAlevey.

A worker testifies about her poor working conditions at a church hearing for community members, ministers, and politicians.

Dannel Malloy and demand justice for the members of his church. We suddenly had the most influential black leader in the city taking on the mayor over a union contract fight, and our relationship with other powerful churches spread quickly from there. Explicit in the message to the mayor and the nursing home executives who employed the workers was that these workers all shared something in common: they were mostly black and brown. Why did they have to accept such low wages in a city with so many riches?

We reframed the public message: the workers are the community, the workers are the union, therefore the union is the community. This was reinforced each time a major religious leader spoke in public and said "these unions and the churches share something in common, our members."

Through this process, the workers began to develop a new profile and identity as worker-leaders, churchgoer-leaders, and community leaders.[7] In many cases, however, the workers were intimidated at the notion of meeting with their religious leaders—something we hadn't initially realized would be as tough for them as it was. Trainings prior to these meetings were key. As we developed our strategy in concert with the workers, we discovered that if they met with their ministers as a group they were more likely to have success in asking for support. It became clear that the work with the churches was emboldening our leaders to stay the course in tough union fights, that if not only the union (meaning workers throughout the state) but God too was on their side they could hang on until victory.

Politicians Come on Board

Politicians in the city, with whom we initially had little engagement, began to pay attention as they realized that the churches and the unions were operating in unity. Politicians could show up at events, informational pickets, and more as long as they knew they had the "cover" of having been summoned by religious leaders. We understood this and worked with worker-leaders to ask their ministers to call the politicians, who in turn began to show up.

Ministers Support Housing Policies and Union Organizing

Working with black ministers, the Union Organizing Project began to educate workers and low-income residents about the origins of the housing crisis. We took the findings from our research on the housing crisis and prepared a PowerPoint presentation the ministers could use to educate their congregations. At the nine-month mark of the campaign, the religious leaders hosted a multicongregation meeting on the housing crisis. We supplied the research, data, and analysis, and they turned out an overflowing crowd of eight hundred mostly black parishioners. It was clear to all the politicians and press in attendance that the unions and churches were now fist-in-glove on the issue of housing. There was fire in the pulpit as minister after minister stood up and pronounced that we needed a housing policy and added, "and we need a wage policy. How come our people get bad housing *and* bad wages?" Media began reporting on the role of the unions in the new housing crusade, and the Union Organizing Project was suddenly on everyone's radar screen as a growing force.

We won two first contracts in the nursing homes. We also won an NLRB ruling on behalf of workers who had been fired for union activity. Church leaders provided pivotal support as workers demanded their jobs back, joining rallies outside a nursing home owned by Vencor, probably the nastiest union-busting chain in an industry with a lot of competition for that title. This put us on the Stamford map. By one year into the campaign we had six first contracts under our belt and five organizing wins. This was real momentum.

It was during the Vencor fight that groups of workers met with ministers and successfully solicited two new kinds of letters. The first was written directly to the boss demanding a free and fair election and letting the boss know the churches were watching. The second was addressed to the workers in the organizing drive, encouraging them to fight for a better life and to vote yes for the union. By the one-year mark we had dozens of letters addressed to bosses and workers. The work with the churches was invaluable in terms of media projection and making bosses think twice about how they dealt with us. In retrospect, however, we believe it was even more important in helping workers to stay the course, stand up to the bosses' threats, and vote yes for the union.

As it became increasingly clear how strong the workers were when they had their church leaders behind them, we began to hold our meetings and trainings in the churches. And then, at first almost by accident and then by deliberate strategy, we began to hold our negotiating sessions with employers in the churches as well. Employers agreed, as the churches were free (saving hundreds of dollars on costly hotels) and seemed neutral.[8] Before each bargaining session the minister entered the worker caucus and led the group in prayer. A few of the more political ministers even walked in while bargaining was in session and, with both workers and employers present, blessed the workers. The employers cringed but had a hard time arguing that we couldn't meet in a religious institution to which many of the workers belonged.

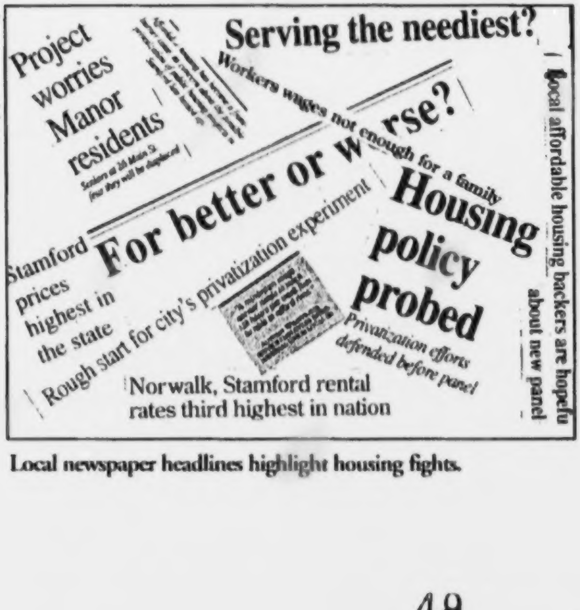
Hosting negotiations gave the ministers a much better understanding of what the unions were about; and they began to see us as a real antipoverty strategy for their members. This relationship developed even further as the ministers saw how democratic the unions were in actual practice. The more workers came to bargaining, the more positive the image became for the unions.

The Housing Fight

A year into the campaign, the housing fight took a turn. The Public Housing Authority announced an "improvement through privatization plan" at one of the housing complexes where we knew from house calls during the organizing drives that we had a lot of new union members. The Housing Authority had circulated a flyer through the housing complex announcing an "informational meeting to discuss the plan" in two weeks. We made some calls to the leaders who had just gotten first contracts and set up small, informal meetings to discuss the privatization plan.

The leaders we met with that weekend were some incredibly strong women from the Vencor nursing home campaign. We had just put their first contracts to rest after an intense all-community war against the employer, which involved dozens of religious leaders, at least half as many powerful politicians, and a lot of actions. When we presented an analysis of the privatization plan, which began with demolition and ended years later with fewer units at much higher rents, these women replied, "We just beat Vencor. So we and our ministers will fight this and we can win just as before."

Of the 168 units in the complex, 38 housed our new members. On the night of our first meeting, members and staff organizers from all the unions agreed to door-knock the entire housing complex the following weekend. We would turn out as many people as we could for an action at the "informational" meeting. In a single day, we were invited in the door of every person who was home. We did mornings and evenings to cover shift


Project worries Manor residents

Serving the neediest?

Workers wages not enough for a family

For better or worse?

Housing policy probed

Privatization efforts defended before panel

Stamford prices highest in the state

Rough start for city's privatization experiment

Norwalk, Stamford rental rates third highest in nation

Local affordable housing backers are hopefu about new panel

Courtesy Jane McAlevey.

Local newspaper headlines highlight housing fights.

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workers, and our members were terrific, in part a product of their training in the organizing and contract fights. Now they were learning new skills in a nonworkplace fight: house-calling and turnout.

We met with a leadership team of residents, most of them union members, to plan the strategy for the meeting. We did media trainings for them, had them role-play and practice, and planned an entire action. Rank-and-file leaders, not union staff, did the final night of door-knocking in the neighborhood, often with piles of kids in tow.

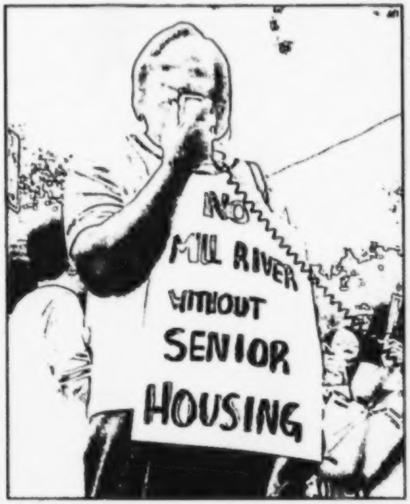
On the night of the meeting, hundreds of residents were in the room. A few leaders invited their ministers to come. Without asking permission, and to the shock of the bureaucrats, the ministers opened the meeting with two prayers asking God to prevent the Housing Authority from tearing down any more units of housing. The crowd went wild, the TV cameras went wild, and the leaders boldly took over the meeting. In their newfound role as resident-union-church leader, they announced their intention to block the housing demolition from ever happening.

The headline in the daily paper the next day read "Health Care Union Fights for Housing" and quoted extensively from people who identified themselves as union members who lived in public housing.[9] Yet another identity was born.

At about the same time, the UAW fight for the public sector workers' first contract with the mayor had reached a dead end. The mayor announced an end to bargaining and said the only way to get a contract was through arbitration. The UAW wanted to break the pattern of accepting the wages, benefits, and work rules packages that other city unions had accepted in what had become a dangerous precedent for us—dangerous because binding arbitration would almost certainly result in the same contract the other unions had already accepted, not a contract we wanted and not a contract the workers had a voice in developing. Instead, the UAW wanted to position itself as a union that was willing to fight to settle a contract and win. This fight had been going on since we arrived in Stamford, and we had organized the workers to engage in dozens of actions, often side by side with ministers.

March Against the Mayor

But now the situation had changed. The Housing Authority meeting had shown that we could generate a real, coordinated movement against the mayor, who was the villain in both the contract and the housing fights. Our housing group had grown well beyond the union membership base to include leaders across the complex. At just the point when our work in the public housing complexes was expanding and explosive with excitement, the UAW decided to call for a general "March Against the Mayor." At that moment, the tenant leaders called on all public housing residents to march with the union through the mayor's neighborhood to fight for decent wages *and* affordable housing—for fairness in one of the richest counties in the nation.


NO MILL RIVER WITHOUT SENIOR HOUSING

Courtesy Jane McAlevey

Public housing residents and union activists march on the mayor's house in Stamford, Conn., August 1999.

By the date of the March Against the Mayor, all hell had broken loose. The mayor himself was going to church leaders to ask them, beg them, subtly bribe them not to show up at the march. The press decried the march as "too confrontational" and "unfair to take the fight to his house, his neighbors, his kids."[10] But everyone on our side was enjoying their new-felt power as major players in the city. The march came off, with fewer ministers in attendance than we had hoped for, but enough to show the mayor that he couldn't outorganize the movement, in spite of the fact that the city was offering the black churches new resources and a "seat at the table."[11] The mayor couldn't stop the ministers from working with us because the foundation of the relationship between the churches and unions was not union-staff-to-minister but congregant-to-minister; the congregants just happened to be union members.

Tenant Organizing

Conscious of research showing that the city had slated every single public housing complex for demolition, we began to organize every tenant. In complex after complex we scoured our mental and digital databases to sort out where we had members. We began the organizing process by meeting with our members, then worked with them to set up door-knocking squads to house-call the entire complex. These complexes housed more than two thousand families, with many adults living under one roof. We had leaders from different unions in every complex.

By our second summer we knew complex by complex where workers were and where union organizing drives were beginning. Now the housing work was going to have a new payoff: warm relations with workers we were seeking to get on membership cards and into committees to campaign for the union at their workplace.

Building Power: Ripple Effects of the Housing Fight

The housing campaign affected our work in myriad ways.

- Workers who might have voted yes for the union at the nursing home or childcare center but were not active members became active in the housing fight.[12]

- The fact that we were expending real resources on the housing fight showed the ministers that our commitment to the campaign—and to issues that went beyond union members and affected the entire population they served—was serious.
- The housing fight undermined the mayor's authority in the city just as we were challenging him to drop arbitration and return to the bargaining table for the UAW union contract. He was clearly getting boxed as antipoor and antiworker.
- Workers who lived in the public housing complexes, or in adjacent private housing slated for demolition, saw the union campaign as directly tied to a defense of their homes. As a result, they were receptive when we came door-knocking to get union cards signed.

By the time we had reached every housing complex we knew so many residents that we could get union cards signed more easily. And because we had carried out more than three dozen actions in the housing fight, all of which received high-profile press, workers in general began to see unions as institutions working to save their housing.

In December 1999, the UAW won their first contract, by far the best in the city. They settled across the table, which the mayor had pledged would happen only over his dead body. The UAW win across the table immediately strengthened our relationship with the rest of the city unions as we had substantially increased the bargaining victories, allowing them to begin their next bargaining cycle with our contract as their floor.

In addition, we stopped the demolition of the housing complexes by launching campaigns against the Stamford Public Housing Authority, convincing the City Council not to give them tax subsidies until they met our demands. We also eventually won a citywide ordinance mandating that any housing torn down in the city's limits must be replaced by an equivalent unit. This "One for One Ordinance" stipulates that the new unit has to go up first, must be located in the school district the resident family is already in, and must be comparable in size and affordability.[13] Housing advocates have judged these to be the most sweeping antidemolition protections on record.[14]

Courtesy Jane McAlevey.

Nursing home workers, Marie Pierre Louis and Rose Teale These, lived in the Oak Park Moderate Income Housing Complex and led the fight to save it from demolition.

The campaign also elected the first African American woman ever to serve on the

Stamford School Board and played an instrumental role in two city council races. One new council member, a rank-and-file District 1199 leader, was the first Latino ever elected to the Stamford city council; the second was one of the campaign's nonunion housing leaders.

While all this was happening we launched a campaign to organize the two thousand janitors in Fairfield County.[15] Janitors initially went out on strike for recognition but stayed out until we won the first contract—all within eight weeks. Along the way, members of the janitors' workforce launched new housing fights because they lived in substandard private housing units that could also be bulldozed for gentrification, in some ways more easily than the public housing could. This led us to campaign for an inclusionary zoning policy mandating minimum numbers of affordable units per new development. We won.

A year and a half into the campaign, in the summer of 1999, we were organizing janitors, taxicab drivers, nursing home workers, assisted living facility workers, public sector workers, public housing residents, and childcare workers. We even organized retirees in a fight to raise public pensions, resulting in an important victory when, for the first time, the Stamford City Council voted against the mayor in support of us and the large numbers of senior citizens who came out to testify. There is no doubt that union power had significantly altered the power structure of the entire county. When the organizing drive for the janitors began, union leaders, housing complex leaders, ministers, and politicians were all present at the kickoff rally. One by one they took the stage to tell the bosses: "We have won everything, and we can beat you too. Every union member and every resident of a public housing complex will stand with these janitors until they win." The press coverage of the rally alone, with one rank-and-file leader after another supporting the janitors, set a new tone of worker power for Fairfield County. Most importantly, the speed with which the janitors won their campaign underscored the power that a radical trade union agenda had built in a conservative region.

Lessons Learned

It is possible to summarize this campaign in a series of "lessons learned."

1. We thought in terms of "workplace/nonworkplace" issues, rejecting the "community/labor" label, which implies that workers are not members of the community and that community members do not spend most of their time at work. Everything about our model was focused on creating synergy between workplace and nonworkplace struggles and on recognizing the labor movement's need to be at the table inside and outside of the shop.
2. We organized the "whole worker member" by integrating worker members' concerns. Plenty of economic forces outside the shop conspire to negate even direct wage and benefit gains made by the contract. So we addressed housing costs as a key economic drain on worker wages.

3. A democratic and even mildly effective union will be the strongest organization than most workers ever belong to, so let's transform unions back into institutions that fight broadly for working-class interests. This will win us direct benefits with the workers we seek to organize and with allies.
4. Leadership development is at the core of the whole movement, and real leaders do not divide their lives into job concerns, which warrant energy and attention; versus everything else, which is trivial. Leaders who go through more than one front of struggle learn new skills and become more politically savvy, in short, become more effective leaders. Nonworkplace fights also keep members engaged with the union between the contract fights, avoiding the common practice by which unions only see the workers they represent every few years.
5. It takes resources to do this, staff and research. It takes good organizers to do this, not entry-level ones. Too often unions doing "community work" hire someone they call a "community organizer" who has never organized anything. Or unions subcontract this work out to front organizations, often with foundation money and not union money, sending a message that developing our members in this way is not "core" but an "add-on." This practice effectively defeats the purpose of building the union a good name with the populations we must organize if we are to succeed.
6. Investing in developing a power structure analysis up-front is a must. This analysis must be presented in a visually coherent way and shared with rank-and-file leaders. At all levels, workers need to understand the power structure and the bigger vision, and participate in shaping the analysis and solutions.

Yes, it is possible to try to summarize this experience with the kind of bulleted paragraphs one might expect in a corporate board of directors' report to shareholders, but it is entirely inadequate. It tells very little of what the campaign was actually about.

Race and Class: Critical to Building a Worker Movement

Take the race issue. Most unions are reluctant to discuss race explicitly. We talked about it all the time. We talked with our leaders about the need to push off the chains of oppression presented by class and race. We did a lot of actions where racism was presented as the problem and unions as the solution. In one, taxicab drivers, all black, mostly Haitian, made balls-and-chains, and walked down the streets singing radical revisions of chain-gang songs, demanding that their oppressive bosses liberate them.

We also talked explicitly about class power. The fact that the project was multi-union turned out to be a huge benefit as leaders began to identify as members of a workers' movement instead of as members of a single, isolated union. The housing fight broadened the focus yet again. Public housing was full of truly poor people—poor workers and poor never-to-be-workers. If they didn't express interest in building a union at a meeting, some organizers thought we should cut them loose, but we organized them.

The unionists in Stamford are now an odd bunch by U.S. union standards. Having had no previous union experience, these members expect that their unions will work on all things that matter to them. They simply do not know that this is the exception in the current-day labor movement, not the rule.

And why should they limit their expectations? The need for a big-picture, "whole worker" approach is not rocket science. It has a clear precedent in approaches needed to curtail the "company store" abuses that were used so effectively against miners and others. Every pay raise would be matched by price hikes at the company store where workers were forced to shop. When we read history we realize that it would be ludicrous for any union to view the fight for a pay raise as a relevant issue and price hikes at the company store as an irrelevant community issue. Today's Stamford is more complex, but the fundamentals are the same. What workers gain in wages they pay back twice in rent. How could housing not be construed as a union fight?

Our office was a zoo in the best way. Every Saturday we had so many meetings that just managing which set of poor people and workers were coming in at what time was a difficult job. We had huge, out-of-control meetings that had to move to church basements to make room for everyone. These meetings were conducted in three languages. First staff, then member volunteers provided translation in Creole, Spanish, and English. This made for tedious meetings, but no one stopped coming. As members often said, there was no place else in Connecticut where people bothered to translate for them.

Or take the campaign to elect Chiquita Stephenson to the school board. She was going to lose, period. She was a twenty-eight-year-old black mom who had dropped out of high school at sixteen when her first child was born. She got a GED years later. She wanted to get on the board after the mayor decided to build yet another high school in white Stamford. The mayor and the entire Democratic Party establishment wanted Chiquita Stephenson to go away. She was too much for them: a poor black mom with kids thinking she can run for school board. We suspended most of our work to run her campaign. We mobilized poor black moms throughout the city to vote for the candidate of poor black moms. The mayor meanwhile campaigned hard for an Irish guy with no kids whom he had put up to run against her. We won.

We always paid for childcare at our weekend meetings. Always. We were not supposed to. We had no line item for it, and yet we figured out how to do it. It may sound ridiculous, but neither unions nor community organizations typically pay for childcare at meetings. But if you provide childcare at a meeting, low-income moms will turn out in a second. With childcare they can participate, and not have a little one hanging on their legs, making constant demands.

I do not recount these stories simply to be entertaining. So much of the debate around union organizing strategy never leaves the realm of jargon and abstraction; it is important to spell out what organizing a "whole worker" means in real life. I want the reader to feel what this experience is like, not because the story needs local color but because the feeling was at the heart of what we were about. Life was changing for these people. They were constituting themselves as a class. They were bargaining with their bosses, not begging. They were taking over government meetings and running them themselves. And they were winning everywhere. They were fundamentally building workers' power, and it was an experience of class, race, faith, and personal liberation.

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[1] At the height of the campaign, we had as many as twenty full-time organizers working in the office, as well as organizers-in-training and steady waves of Union Summer interns. The central office and all organizing expenses were paid 25 percent by the AFL-CIO and 75 percent by the participating unions, formalizing the locals' commitment in a concrete way. Critical to the campaign's success was the financial commitment from the unions, a written contract between the AFL-CIO and the local unions that included a jurisdictional agreement and a commitment to share all data in a central database.

[2] The AFL-CIO had decided each region of the nation would have one funded project, using some mix of funds from the newly established Organizing Fund. Each project was set up differently; the unique aspect of the Stamford campaign was its multi-union character. This campaign began despite initial resistance from those at the AFL-CIO who argued that the Connecticut project did not fit into their sectoral approach to organizing. Connecticut was viewed as a silly attempt to suggest geography mattered by those who failed to appreciate the necessary marriage of sector plus geography as a way to rebuild our base. Connecticut, and Stamford in particular, was not high on anyone's list of places to launch aggressive organizing drives, with one exception: the local unions organizing in Connecticut. The factors that led the local unions to initiate the campaign were compelling and quite distinct from their national unions' agenda. Political power in the state had gradually shifted to Stamford and Fairfield County, and the labor movement had no real base in the area. This presented increasing difficulties with passing state legislation favorable to labor.

[3] Throughout this process there was more than a little skepticism as to whether this was a worthwhile expenditure of staff resources and time, as opposed to the more immediate need to advance first contracts. We decided to get the contract fights in motion, but to hold the line and persist with the big picture analysis of the area. In the end, the PSA was extremely useful in beginning to plan our overall approach to the campaign.

[4] Thigpenn is the founder and director of AGENDA, the Environmental and Economic Justice Training Project, and CIPHER, a related research think tank.

[5] A researcher was hired to do the more academic and statistical aspects of the PSA. What sectors were expanding or shrinking? Which sectors and companies relied on public capital and taxes? Which ones did not? Which companies donated how much money to which politicians from which party? Who dominated the appointment process for public authorities of all types, from zoning boards to the golf courses? The City of Stamford has two public golf courses with two public boards, one of which is controlled by the mayor's family. The entire issue of the golf courses became a favorite mantra of the city council president once we had organized her to our side. She was routinely quoted as saying that before workers in the city would get measly contracts, and before the city tried to privatize a city-owned nursing home, she would sell the golf courses.

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[6] The city had just completed an acrimonious debate about where to build a new high school, and the mayor had pushed hard to build another one in North Stamford, perpetuating the existing pattern in which black kids rise early, spend hours on the busses, and cannot imagine a neighborhood school.

[7] Within a year of the campaign's launch, one minister routinely remarked that his parishioners who were in unions were becoming the leaders across every committee in church.

[8] While there were tremendous advantages to meeting in churches, it did lead occasionally to problems. There was the occasional moment when a minister forgot a meeting, and people stood locked outside until we could track him down. A more subtle problem was the balance of power on "our side" of the meeting, as the power of the ministers seemed to trump the unions at all times.

[9] *Stamford Advocate*, June 4, 1999.

[10] *Stamford Advocate*, various articles, August 1999.

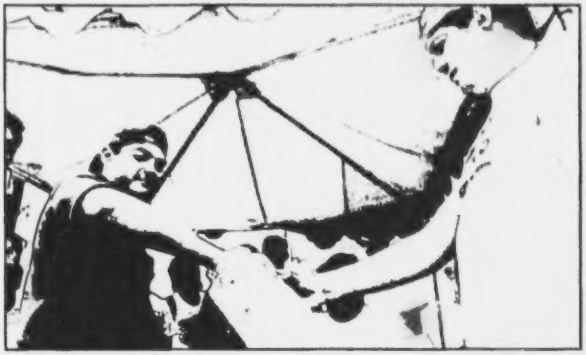
[11] We were not privy to details at the time, but later the mayor offered funds to rebuild the black community center, a center that had long been deteriorating.

[12] The UAW, which has a substantial number of childcare workers in Massachusetts and Connecticut, organized 239 childcare workers at the Childcare Center, Inc., the Head Start provider in Fairfield County.

[13] The ordinance was passed October 1, 2001, and was reported in the article, "Reps OK Housing Replacement Ordinance," on the front page of the *Stamford Advocate* on October 2, noting that "Housing experts have judged these measures to be the most sweeping in the nation."

[14] *Stamford Advocate*, October 2, 2001.

[15] We initially organized around housing issues with the black workers who lived in public housing and with their ministers. Latino immigrants did not live in public housing—too much paperwork and documentation was required. How and where to engage a mass base of Latinos was an important question in the campaign. Despite the momentum established with the churches, the Catholics were initially absent due to then Bishop Edward Eagan's anti-union stance. It took months and the same strategy of congregant-to-parish-priest, as well as Bishop Eagan's departure to New York, before the Latino-dominated Catholic churches became involved in the campaign. The eventual speed of the campaign reflected this groundwork as well as the changes happening across SEIU inside the Building Services Division. The revival of the Justice for Janitors movement meant that janitors from Los Angeles and Denver flew in to work with us. And the changes resulting from the trusteeship of nearby New York City Local 32BJ were crucial. By the time our campaign began, 32BJ was able to play an important role in mitigating some of the worst contractor behavior next door in Connecticut. When the INS threat hit the strike early on, it was 32BJ's threat to the key cleaning-service contractor that suddenly made the INS threat disappear.



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Paolo Freire Hits L.A.'s Mean Streets: Organizing Day Laborers

By David Bacon

I'm going to sing you a story, friends	Voy a cantar compañeros
that will make you cry,	algo que da compasion
how one day in front of K-Mart	un dia frente a la K-Mart
the *migra* came down on us,	nos cayo la migracion
sent by the sheriff	manda por el Sheriff
of this very same place.	de esta mismita region.

The thumping bass strings of a *bajo sexto* punctuate a simple two-four rhythm as a couple of old guitars and a plaintive accordion carry the familiar chord changes of a Mexican *corrido.* Seven mournful voices ring across the parking lot on St. Andrews Place, belting out the Spanish words in traditional style.

Surrounding the singers, dozens of men dressed in work clothes listen intently, crowding under a blue awning or standing out on the black asphalt, sweltering in the sun. The *musicos* proceed with their cautionary tale:

We don't understand why,
we don't know the reason,
why there is so much

> discrimination against us.
> In the end we'll wind up
> all the same in the grave.

At the end of each verse, the listeners shout or whistle their encouragement. It's obvious that almost everyone knows the story and that many have had similar experiences.

The song relates the history of a famous 1996 immigration raid in the City of Industry. On a rainy winter morning, Border Patrol agents charged into a street corner clinic where forty day laborers had lined up to be tested for AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. One worker, Omar Sierra, had just taken his seat at the examining station where a clinic worker had tied off his arm and inserted the needle for drawing the first blood sample. As agents of the *migra* swarmed across the street and sidewalk, Sierra jumped up, tore off the tourniquet, pulled the needle out of his vein, and ran.

Sierra escaped and made it home. Shaken by his experience and determined never to forget his less fortunate friends, he committed their fate to music.

> With this verse I leave you,
> I'm tired of singing,
> hoping the *migra*
> won't come after us again,
> because in the end, we all have to work.

The seven singers in the parking lot—Sierra, Pablo Alvarado, Jesus Rivas, Julio Cesar Bautista, Paula de la Cruz, John Garcia, and Omar Garcia—are the day labor band Los Jornaleros del Norte. And singing Sierra's "Corrido de Industry" is a new way of organizing Los Angeles's mostly immigrant day labor force.

It hasn't been easy for the Jornaleros del Norte to survive as a band. All its members—except Alvarado, who's a full-time organizer for the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles (CHIRLA)—earn their daily bread from the curb every morning, at any of more than two hundred day labor sites across Los Angeles. None of them owns a car, so getting together to practice is hard. And taking time off to perform doesn't help pay the rent at the end of the month.

But when they are able to play, their audience recognizes themselves, not just in the words and music but in the clothes, the mannerisms, and the hundred details that make it plain that these musicians earn their living on the streets. The band is a living, singing demonstration that solidarity among day laborers is not just a possibility but a reality.

Day Labor Organizing

Organizing people who work on the streets in Los Angeles requires more than a sing-along and a common culture however. At six on a gray morning beside the Home Depot parking lot at Sunset Boulevard and St. Andrews Place, a grittier reality shows its face as Alvarado and another CHIRLA organizer, Mario Martinez, approach a group of twenty men strung out along the sidewalk. The workers are wearing plain trousers and cheap workshirts. Some lean against a cinderblock wall in small groups, talking quietly and smoking; others sit on the curb itself. They're all waiting for the contractors to pull out of the Home Depot parking lot.

The two organizers patiently try to convince the workers to come to a new day labor pickup site CHIRLA has opened nearby instead of standing on the corner here. A couple of workers say they've tried to get work there and that there weren't enough jobs.

"The site's just starting up," Alvarado explains. "It will take a little time to convince the contractors to use it. That's what we're doing with the leaflets. But if we all go over there, the contractors will come too. They'll have no choice." The new site, Martinez tells them, has free coffee and plastic chairs for the workers to sit on while they wait. There's a blue awning to provide relief from the sun or shelter from the rain. And it has one other big plus: no raids.

"Before the new site, there were three big sweeps by the Hollywood Division here, with a lot of arrests," Martinez reminds the workers. "They came out here with guns drawn and made everyone lie face down on the sidewalk. They put handcuffs on people. What will happen if they come again and arrest you? What will happen to your children then? Think about it."

A few heads nod in grudging acknowledgment as they remember the raids. The memory is bitter and humiliating.

CHIRLA started organizing this corner more than a year ago. Once a core of workers had formed the committee that voted to organize a new site, CHIRLA persuaded Sears to donate the use of an old parking lot behind its store, and the city provided some funds for staffing it.

"I felt this competition for work when I first came here," Alvarado remembers. A stocky Salvadoran in his early thirties, he arrived in Los Angeles in 1990 and went out to the corner to find work.

Like each of the thousands of immigrant laborers who get jobs on the curb every morning, Alvarado arrived in Los Angeles at the end of an arduous physical and psychological journey, one that started in the country hamlet of El Nispero where his family had a farm.

In the sixth grade, he saw his own teacher killed by the army. After that no teachers came to the village, so he became a literacy volunteer in the war-torn region.

Alvarado learned the techniques of popular education, a way of teaching designed to organize the poor, developed by the great Brazilian educator, Paulo Friere. It relies on relating to the personal experiences of the students, teaching politics while tackling the alphabet. "We call it teaching the word through teaching the world," he explains.

Helping poor farmers learn to read in war-torn Central America was no more neutral than teaching slaves to read in the old South. "Popular education teaches subversive questions," Alvarado says. "It asks—why is there a war going on? Why are some people rich, and others poor?"

Alvarado left El Salvador to bring his younger brother north to safety. "When I arrived in Los Angeles, I had no money and no friends," he remembers. "Looking for work was humiliating. The employers would get out of their pickups and come over and touch me to see if I was strong. Each time I got a job, I felt I was taking bread from the mouth of a man with a family."

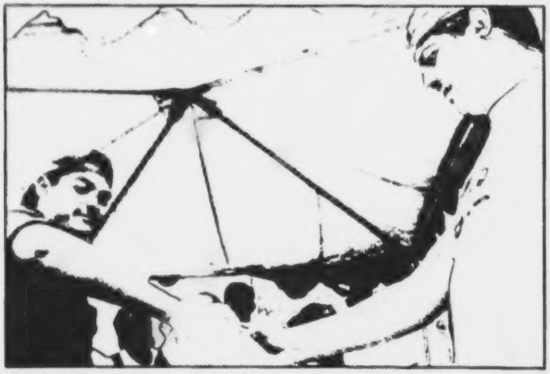
He recovered his humanity by finding a use for the skills he'd brought from home. He started teaching coworkers to read and went on to hold classes, first at the YMCA in East Los Angeles and then with the Institute for Popular Education for Southern California (IDEPSCA).

That was the beginning of the day labor organizing project.

It's no accident that CHIRLA starts literacy classes at all its organized day labor sites. It's another way, like the day labor band, of organizing and teaching immigrants how their new world works.

Day Labor Sites

The longest-organized CHIRLA sites in the city are those in North Hollywood and Harbor City—the original hiring halls set up by the City of Los Angeles in 1989. Today they provide a vision of what finding a day labor job can be like. The North Hollywood site, off Sherman Way, has a drive-through area where contractors can pull up to do their hiring. Farther inside the big triangular lot, an open area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Day laborers wait for jobs at site organized by CHIRLA.

with an awning shelters workers as they play checkers, talk, and drink coffee. A portable building provides space for literacy classes and a tiny office with computers.

Rows of cabbages and onions, extending for nearly one hundred yards, hug the fence at the edge of the property. Chile seedlings poke through the light brown soil. A few men in work clothes stoop among the plants, picking weeds and spraying with hoses. Many of L.A.'s day laborers were farmers, and this garden is eloquent evidence of their love for the land.

On a recent morning, a blue pickup truck with a rack of two-by-fours on the back pulls into the lot. A young white man in paint-spattered work clothes gets out. Some of the waiting laborers point to a counter under the awning, on which sit two plastic jars. In the jar with the yellow plastic lid, every worker has put an orange ticket bearing his name. In the other jar, with its green top, are the names of the workers who speak English. After taking a name from each jar, the contractor asks the site manager about the expected wages. He's told to talk to the workers whose names he's pulled. After a brief discussion, the contractor agrees to eight dollars an hour and the laborers climb into the back of his truck.

Gone are the days—at this and other CHIRLA sites at least—when workers crowded around the contractors, clamoring for work. "If the contractor already knows who he wants to hire, we let him ask for specific people by name," explains Victor Narro, the CHIRLA staff member who manages the day labor programs. "Also, contractors can request specific skills, like carpenter, welder, or painter."

Building Unity: Day Labor *Teatro*

While the day laborers' first priority at the North Hollywood site is finding work, they find other things there as well, beginning with friendships and a sense of community. When it took over the city-funded hiring operation two years ago, CHIRLA brought more than additional resources and building materials (for the portable structure in which English classes are held, for example). Instead of just helping a few people get jobs, Pablo Alvarado, Victor Narro, and other CHIRLA staff viewed the day labor program as a means to unite the workers. Once they were organized, the workers themselves were able to take the steps (e.g., learning English) that can lead to an increase in earning power.

"I believe you have to find a way for people to exercise more power over their own lives," explains Juan Carillo, a veteran of the Harbor City site. Carrillo reached back to his own experience working in Latino theater groups as a student at UCLA. Such *teatros*, he reasoned, could be another tool for organizing. A year ago, he helped set up the first day labor theater group. In the program's first production, "The Curse of the Day Laborers," which grew out of improvisations by the workers, a hostile resident in a neighborhood near a pick-up site puts a curse on the workers in the person of a real-life sheriff notorious in Agoura Hills for hassling day laborers. Finally, a *curandera* (an old woman who heals sickness) finds a way to drive out the demon.

"We don't have a script with lines," Carrillo explains. "We have ideas we want to get across, but no written dialogue." When the day laborers first become actors, they start by telling stories of their own experiences on the corner. Then when they perform, they move among the workers in the audience asking questions. "We don't want people to be passive observers," he says. "If you can demand your rights from an employer in a play, then you can do it in life."

Today, the theater is moving beyond its original function as a forum of self-expression. The goal now is to take the show on the road, to all the corners and curbs and parking lots across the L.A. basin where people line up for work.

"I think this is the big change," Carrillo says. "The *teatro* has begun now to work toward forming the union."

The Day Labor Union: Confronting Contractor Abuse and Local Politics

I went to study English
because I felt I had to,
so I could defend myself
from an angry Anglo.
There where I worked
they tried to cheat me
because of the damn English
I didn't know how to speak.

That white man told me
in his angry English words:

You wetback don't understand
what you are supposed to do.
You wetback don't understand
what you are supposed to do.
(from "La Frasesita")

On the corner of Pomona and Atlantic in East Los Angeles, Agustin Moncada describes how he was cheated of over half his wages just a few weeks ago. "I got picked up by a roofer at one o'clock on a Friday," he recalls. "As we were driving away from the corner, I asked for $8 an hour. I've worked as a roofer, and I know what I'm worth. The contractor said 'Okay, I'll see how you work.'"

Moncada worked five hours Friday, and then nine hours daily for the next three days. On Sunday, he was paid $100, less than he'd actually earned. On Monday, he told his boss he was disgusted with the job's unpleasant conditions and that he wasn't coming anymore. But when the contractor dropped Moncada off that evening, he told him he didn't have enough money to pay the rest of his wages. He agreed to meet Moncada on the corner the following day.

At the end of the week, Moncada was still waiting.

In September 1997, street corner committees across the city sent delegates to an Inter-Corner Conference to begin writing the first bylaws and principles for the Day Labor Union. While it's a non-traditional union insofar as its purpose isn't collective bargaining, it does attempt to set uniform standards for wages. Individual sites set their own standards—there are now $6, $7, and $8 corners all over Los Angeles, with wage minimums established by the workers themselves.

Starting in Agoura Hills in 1989, southland communities have passed ordinances prohibiting the workers from getting jobs on the street. Since then, ordinances have been passed in Costa Mesa, Los Angeles County, City of Industry, La Mirada, Malibu, Laguna Beach, Pomona, Glendale, and Gardena. Although CHIRLA sets up organized sites, they believe looking for work on the street is a human right.

The union is increasingly the workers' voice in debates over local city ordinances passed to prohibit workers from getting jobs on the street. It also negotiates with the police and sheriffs over law enforcement and public relations issues. When the workers act in an organized way, they dramatically transform their relations with local businesses and residents.

The Day Labor Union is still a long way from its goal. But it has an attitude toward politicizing its members reminiscent of the CIO's left-wing activists. "Through organizing on a local level, workers learn to become good political analysts," Alvarado explains. "They grow politically and intellectually, and start to influence others. We want to develop organic leaders, as Gramsci described them—people who come from the community and decide to stay there. We see day laborers as the historical subject, as we call it in popular education, people who are capable of acting for themselves."

CHIRLA's Day Labor Union has created stability and developed leadership in a situation in which every worker has to find a new job every day. But day labor is only the most extreme form of a problem faced by the millions of Californians who no longer have a secure relationship with a single employer. Economic and demographic changes in the state have presented a new set of questions about how to organize casual labor.

In Los Angeles, it's the "invisible" day laborers who have begun to suggest answers, as they discover how a shared immigrant culture can act as a powerful tool in their efforts to articulate their own experiences and needs, and build an organization from the grass roots up. Major U.S. labor unions should pay heed as they look for ways to unite a workforce that is in general more diverse—and less secure—than ever before. Their continued existence may depend on their success in following CHIRLA's lead.

Leadership Development

Chapter

3

Courtesy Stephanie Arellano.

Year 2000 Justice for Janitors Campaign: Reflections of a Union Organizer

By Stephanie Arellano

In spring 2000, the Justice for Janitors union of Los Angeles waged a three-week strike that captured the attention of the city and galvanized widespread public support.[1] Elected officials participated in civil disobedience in support of the strike, the highest-ranking Catholic priest in the city staged a public mass for thousands of striking janitors, and even the Republican mayor expressed publicly that the janitors weren't asking for enough money at the bargaining table. At one critical point during the strike, thousands of janitors and supporters in bright red t-shirts staged a ten-mile, twelve-hour march down Wilshire Boulevard, heartline of corporate Los Angeles.

By all accounts, the strike was a huge victory for the union. Workers on average won a 26 percent wage increase as part of their three-year contract. The impact of the janitors' victory set the tone for negotiations throughout the state and throughout the country. And the union successfully organized three thousand previously nonunion janitors in neighboring Orange County.

The janitors' organizing victory has been publicized nationally and internationally, with the help of Ken Loach's film *Bread and Roses.* A new children's book has been released about the janitors, and a book highlighting the contributions of the women leaders of the janitors' union is forthcoming from the UCLA Labor Center. But what is less known is the crucial role of popular education in preparing the janitors and the union for the strike.

Stephanie Arellano was a lead organizer during the year 2000 strike and was integrally involved in developing and implementing the popular education program that proved invaluable to the victory.

Courtesy Stephanie Arellano.

Busloads of SEIU Local 1877 janitors join workers in Sacramento in their struggle for a union.

This article is taken from a discussion at a Los Angeles popular education workshop on organizing in December 2001.

Why did workers go out on strike? What did they hope to achieve?

There were some immediate contract goals such as wage increases and improved benefits. But there's also a whole history of the Justice for Janitors (JfJ) campaign in Los Angeles. This campaign built on that history and on JfJ's goals of highlighting the inequalities of wealth distribution in Los Angeles and of building public support for low-wage immigrant workers in this city. Many of the janitors have been involved in this struggle for a long time—long before we, the organizers, started working at the union, even before the JfJ campaign began. They've been part of the whole struggle to bring the union back. Jovita Ramirez, one of the longtime leaders, she told me how in the '70s she was making $8.50 an hour, and then in the mid to late '80s some people from the union came and she didn't even know there was a union. Well, they came and said, "We're in big trouble. We're trying to negotiate that they only cut your wages by half." Jovita did not accept that; that was not okay with her, and that's when her organizing career began. She started organizing her coworkers to do something. She said, "I'm not going to accept this; I'm the one that does this work."

What's the history of JfJ in L.A.? How did the union go from fighting concessions to a successful strike?

In the '80s, during the recession, the industry really declined and subcontractors sprang up all over the place. At the same time, you had this influx of primarily undocumented Latin American immigrants fleeing unlivable conditions in their countries—a group of people the contractors thought they could intimidate into working for lower wages. And that's when the industry changed from predominantly African American to predominantly Latino. So in the late '80s when SEIU started the JfJ campaign in L.A., it was to get back what they had lost, to regain ground. The goal of organizing janitors was first to bring back all the buildings that had gone nonunion and then to get wages back to a livable level, a living wage. They had a lot of work on their hands.

To understand the challenge facing JfJ, you have to understand a little bit about the industry. Previously SEIU 399 had individual contracts with building owners, and the union negotiated with the owners for the janitors' wages and benefits.[2] So there was a direct relationship between the union and the person who owned the building. The industry is actually still like that in some cities like New York and Chicago. In the current commercial real estate industry in L.A., though, the building owners contract with cleaning companies that hire the janitors. By subcontracting out the cleaning of their buildings, the owners created space between themselves and the janitors and their union. Not only was it a cheaper alternative for the owners, but they did not have to deal with the union. And, because the cleaning companies were nonunion, janitors' wages were cut in half.

The JfJ campaign is focused on the building owners, even though most janitors are employed by building service subcontractors. Pressuring the contractors directly doesn't work because even if some contractors do agree to union representation, the owners can easily replace them with nonunion contractors. So JfJ's goal is to pressure owners to use union contractors and to pay union wages. JfJ has always used high-profile campaigns to influence public opinion to support low-wage janitors. They had a turning point ten years before this strike, in 1990, when the police attacked peaceful demonstrators here in upscale Century City. That resulted in public outrage and support that enabled them to settle a contract and win an important victory for the union here in L.A.

How did you prepare for this strike?

The union leadership early on consciously decided to make the campaign as participatory as possible. Our overall goals were to promote a culture of participation and democracy in the union and to foster a sense of ownership over the campaign. From these goals emerged an organizational structure and training program that was the backbone of the campaign and ultimately was responsible for its success. We had geographic action teams of workers represented by a stewards' council. And we had a year 2000 (Y2K) committee that planned the campaign and provided leadership for geographic organizing committees.

How did the strategy inform the education and vice versa?

What we were trying to do was make sure that all the members were aware of the history and context of the campaign. Most of the members had five or six years of experience in the union. We knew that if members and organizing staff knew what our research staff knew and understood it deeply, that would change how we were able to pull off this campaign. This was a priority because we wanted to be sure the janitors truly understood and took part in making decisions about the strategy of the campaign. We believed that if they didn't understand the power relations in the industry, their capacity to make decisions would be limited and their investment in the campaign would be marginal.

We needed members to understand—even though we couldn't say it publicly—that the real targets were the owners. Those are the people who have the power and make decisions. But the matrix of building ownership, financing, and management is a labyrinth, and understanding it is a full-time job for an entire research department. Our job was to make this complex system accessible and comprehensible to rank-and-file leaders.

How did you teach it?

It's not as though we had several popular education sessions; rather we had a popular education approach to planning the campaign. So everything turned into an exercise: What do you know? What do you want to know? How are we going to find out? Rank-and-file leaders participated in a series of trainings on the ownership structure of the commercial real estate industry. We used role-plays and theater games to involve janitors in learning more about the industry they worked in. And we used our own version of the Monopoly game to demonstrate the difference between publicly traded real estate companies, investment fund managers, and developers.

We involved worker-leaders from the Y2K committee in planning the training. During meetings with them, while we were developing the training, we asked the group what they knew about the owners of their buildings. We asked, "Do you know their name? Do you know what kind of owner they are? Do you know who manages your building? Are they an individual owner?" People didn't know what this term meant, but they tried to figure it out on their own and they'd come up with the name of the owner.

During this process, the worker-leaders came up with the idea of mapping when they realized Arden, Trizec Hahn, Maguire, Equity, and Douglass Emmett were prominent owners. People wanted the janitors who worked in those areas to see who the important owners were in the market. So the Y2K committee decided that we would build this huge map so all the members could understand—it took us forever. And when people came in to the training they worked in small groups to identify the owner of their building. Then they had to find their building on the map and post the name of the owners, so they could see there's a big concentration of Arden over here, there's a big concentration of Douglas Emmett over here, and so on. So everyone could see who the important owners were.

Some really ingenious ideas came out of this exercise that affected our strategy. We knew that it was the owners who had the power to improve janitors' wages and that we needed to convince them to change the situation. So one idea which we might not have thought of on our own as organizers was the concept of having anchor buildings in the different geographic regions. Doing the mapping exercise with the members helped them understand who had the power and led to collaborative discussions among staff and the members that were key to developing our strategy.

Los Angeles is a big sprawl with several smaller centers of commerce: downtown Los Angeles, Century City, the Westwood corridor, Long Beach, El Segundo, and Marina del Rey, for example. These are all little pockets of high-rise buildings, which is where we had members. In actuality, we were organizing five thousand members dispersed among over seven hundred worksites. There was no way we would be able to protect all of these buildings from strikebreakers. If your building has three people in it and six doors, how are you going to do that? That wasn't the result we wanted anyway. The idea wasn't to keep every building in L.A. from being cleaned but to bring certain owners—who fit certain criteria and whom we had identified as targets—to their knees and to let them know that their life was going to be absolutely miserable until they gave us what we wanted.

So after several committee meetings a decision was made to have anchor buildings for our actions. We'd only go to buildings managed or owned by the targeted owners. They were the ones we needed to speak with.

What did an education session look like?

The training itself was something we developed with the worker leaders; then they took it out to other members through the stewards' council and other committees. One activity that was really effective was our version of Monopoly. Participants were given different identities by drawing out of a hat: very, very rich people, rich people, middle-class people, pension funds, corporations, real estate investment trusts (REITS), and investment managers.

Each character was introduced to the group by a worker-leader who had helped develop the training. Each was given a different color of money. Participants played

Courtesy Stephanie Arellano

Janitors stage an action at L.A. International Airport to support security workers in their historic union campaign.

the market: buying buildings if they had enough money, giving money to investment managers, or buying shares of publicly traded real estate companies. Only the very, very rich people and the corporations were allotted sufficient funds to purchase their own buildings. The investment managers and the REITS bought up the most buildings with the money they collected from all of the different sources in the game. As the participants collected their cash, they purchased buildings by taping their money to large cardboard images of buildings.

In the end, the members had a much stronger understanding of how this complex system works. Not only did they role-play at participating in the system, they also created a visual image of where everybody's money goes and who benefits financially from it. So by the time we got to 2000, most of the union leaders had a sophisticated understanding of the market they worked in and understood why the campaign had chosen particular targets.

The fact that the flow of learning was in all directions was the best part: we as organizers taught ourselves about the context of this campaign and taught members what we knew; members also shared industry information and their own experiences with us. The members then taught what they learned from the training sessions to other members. In other words, workers who participated in the beginning training went to the shop stewards' council and used the same popular education techniques to teach other members about power relationships in the commercial real estate industry.

What were some of the biggest challenges in using a popular education approach in the campaign?

Many of the janitors had been involved in this struggle for a long time—long before we, the organizers, had worked at the union—and they'll be in it long after we're gone, and so there were times when we made mistakes in the beginning, attempting to do the propaganda manipulator thing.

We wanted to be participatory, we wanted to be democratic, we just weren't always sure how to do it. One barrier for us as organizers was our own limitation in understanding how popular education worked. I think we understood it much better after we had worked on the campaign and then could reflect back. The members were very astute and put us in our place when we weren't doing it right. It's not like they said, "You're using really bad popular education methods and you're bastardizing the term." Instead, they didn't respond well to what we were doing and said "We don't like it like this, we like it better when you did it like that."

We just listened to them and tried to accommodate what they wanted. Throughout the process, we did ongoing evaluations with the member-leaders. And after each training, no matter how late we were running and no matter how long it took, we still had each person take time to give feedback. I think that using those responses to guide our work was crucial in helping us overcome obstacles in the process.

Courtesy Stephanie Arellano.

More than 4,000 women janitors turn out for a March 8 International Women's Day action.

The other thing that came up was the gender dynamics in the group. When you're using pop ed you want everyone to participate, everyone's experience is valuable. This was the first time that the union had had this kind of structure where there was a campaign steering committee [the Y2K committee] that was a representative committee made up of women and men and people from different geographic regions. On the committee there were people from downtown and Century City who were the people who made the "big bucks" of $7.80, and they had health care, sick days, and vacation. And then you had the people who worked in the valley who made $6.40 and they had just barely gotten their health care. And interestingly enough, most of the leaders in the lower-wage tiers were women, and most of the leaders in the higher-wage tiers were men.

Traditionally the JfJ campaign wasn't super-deliberate about having gender balance on the negotiating committee. And so when they were reorganizing downtown and Century City and bringing it back union, they took whoever presented themselves as a leader, which is often the guy, right? And then a few unique women like Rosa Ayala came forward—they're the people who aren't going to let anyone get in their way, no matter what, that's just how they are. So there were always these two or three women but this big group of men. In the committee meetings, a lot of the times the men would discount what the women were saying—and it wasn't that they were discounting it on a factual basis; it was just who it was coming from. And we were trying to work with people's experience and their knowledge. So trying to overcome that without being patronizing and without bullying or pushing our agenda was incredibly painstaking and hard.

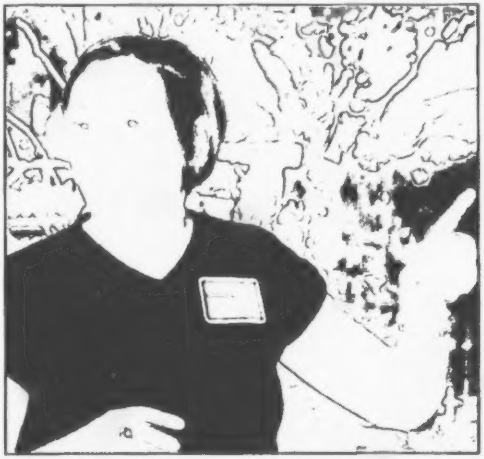
Ultimately, I think we did the right thing. We planned a session where we just talked about "Who are the people of Justice for Janitors? Who are the janitors of Los Angeles?" And people said, "We're Latinos, we're Central Americans, we're Salvadoreños, Nicaragüenses, we're Hondureños." And then somebody on the team said, "We're mostly women," and the men didn't believe it. She said, "Yes we are; most janitors are women." They started to duke it out, and she said, "Don't you read the information that people give you? Right here it says that more than half of janitors are women." So we dealt with it head on but didn't deal with it *for* them, which is hard for a staff person. We were facilitating but not facilitating, and you have inner fear of the outcome. The hard part I think for union organizers is that most of them don't believe that the members can do it on their own. You can get really paternalistic, and I've seen a lot of it. And I've tried really hard not to be that way, but I have been that way sometimes.

That initial conversation that they had about gender turned our usual Saturday training into an eight-hour—I don't know what you would call it—a long debate on gender. Ultimately they came out of it with basically an affirmative action plan for the negotiating committee so it would be 50 percent women. But they had to work through it themselves. At first the men wouldn't go for it. So the women said, "We'll just go organize so that every single committee position is a woman." And the men said, "Oh, so you want a bias between men and women; that's divisive." But ultimately the men who were the most adamant were forced by other men, and both men and women were forced to stand together and present this idea to the stewards' council. And they did it. And afterwards they said, "That wasn't so bad, and I think it's fair," and they learned a lot from the whole process.

So I consider that to be a popular education technique; some people might consider it to be conflict mediation. It was extremely challenging, and it was a continuing fight throughout. On the negotiating committee the women would come up against the men, the men would come up against the women, they had these big fights about who should make what decisions. It was an ongoing debate. . . . But ultimately we all grew from it.

Besides the gender issues, were there other ways the union had to change to make this leadership/pop ed piece of the campaign work?

Leading up to the strike we had three rank-and-file full-time reps and we had three people who came out of a student organizing background—everybody with really good intentions. We, the student organizers, fought our paternalism and tried to be really conscious about how we were doing our work. And the rank-and-file organizers were used to being leaders; they came on staff because they were such good leaders. But when you come on staff you're not a leader



Courtesy UCLA Labor Center.

Stephanie Arellano at an L.A. popular education workshop, 2001.

anymore, you're staff. And making that transition from leader in the front—leading the chants, confronting the boss—to staff was incredibly challenging. Your job is to teach other people to do that, and you don't get to do it anymore. So we had to change—to create a culture of leadership and organizing to keep the membership involved in every step of the campaign.

One thing that still needs some work though—in the union culture you never take the time to evaluate. After the strike there was never an opportunity to think about what we did. We had these rushed meetings, "Well, what was good about the strike? What was bad about it? Okay we'll see you later." That's one of the weaknesses of JfJ. We don't keep track of things, of what we learned.

What were the basic principles that made the campaign successful?

The only way we were able to do the organizing work was by doing the leadership development work with the staff and with the leaders. I think that by having the leadership development program integrated into every part of our work, that the people who didn't think the members could do it learned that they could. Every Monday in staff meeting, it was, "We're doing an action on Thursday, what leaders are you going to work with in the valley?" And with each person, we'd talk through what she was going to do that week and where she needed help. And when people were forced to do that, they realized, "Oh, they [the members] can do this on their own. I don't need to do building visits in that area because they can do it and get even more people to come than I would have gotten." And the results came, people got it, and the naysayers were convinced by the fact that we incorporated that into every bit of the program. So it's hard for me to separate leadership development and organizing because what we did on the organizing was impossible without the leadership development piece and the leadership development piece was kind of the rock that make the popular education happen and they're all very connected.

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[1] SEIU Local 1877 is a statewide local that represents janitors in California.

[2] SEIU Local 399 represented janitors and health care workers at the time. SEIU later created Local 1877, a statewide building services local.

Janitors' chant for justice (Janitors' adaptation of "We are the Union.")

Somos justicieros
de las compañías
que explotan al obrero.
¿Que queremos?
¡Queremos justicia,
queremos dignidad,
queremos respeto
para los obreros!
Y cuando protestamos
la gente nos preguntan
quienes somos.
Nosotros contestamos:
¡Somos la Unión!
¡Somos la Unión!
¿Y que queremos?
¡Queremos justicia,
respeto, y dignidad
para los Janitors!

We're soldiers for justice
from the companies
that exploit the workers.
What do we want?
We want justice,
we want dignity,
we want respect
for the workers!
And when we protest
the people ask us
who we are.
So we answer:
We are the Union!
We are the Union!
And what do we want?
We want justice,
respect, and dignity
for the Janitors!

Courtesy Pam Tau Lee.

Las Vegas Hotel Workers Find a Voice: The Power of a Popular Education Approach to Health and Safety

By Pam Tau Lee and Robin Baker

Occupational safety and health can play an important role in building union power. It is an issue of dignity that resonates with workers. In our experience, health and safety can support union organizing efforts, build leadership, and form the basis of labor-community alliances. All too often, however, unions see health and safety merely as a technical service for their members.

In this paper, we will share how the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) has used popular education to help unions break out of the technocratic approach to health and safety and unleash the full potential of this issue.[1] This potential is best expressed through an in-depth example. We focus on a case study that illustrates LOHP's use of popular education and participatory action research to support a successful campaign by Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE).

Background

We at LOHP first began to explore a popular education approach to health and safety training in 1980 when we developed an intensive, weeklong training program for union health and safety representatives. We decided to bring together two different educational streams: the participatory adult education approach found in much of the labor education world, and "empowerment," or popular education.[2] We were inspired to think about how we might use health and safety training to promote action for workplace justice after learning about how literacy-based popular education was being used around the world to catalyze social action. The introduction in the LOHP training manual reflects this attempt to connect union training with popular education, noting that "learning activities are designed to allow the participants to develop both technical knowledge in health and safety and general union skills, such as effective planning, problem solving, analyzing the root causes of problems, communication, and leadership."[3]

Our new approach to health and safety training was enthusiastically embraced by the many unions that participated. They reported that the course not only helped them to address hazards in the workplace but also brought new energy and activism to their locals. Encouraged by this success, we looked for ways to incorporate popular education into more of our work.

However, we ran into a variety of barriers to this method of "training for action" and soon discovered that we could not take a purist approach. Often we were invited to do safety training for a union that just wanted the technical information delivered in the shortest time possible to fit in its busy schedule. In other cases we were brought in to do training for joint labor-management committees, making discussion of union strategies and empowerment inappropriate. In reality it has been rare for us to be able to work with a group of workers as we might wish: over a sustained period of time allowing workers to explore their experiences of oppression, discuss root causes, develop a critical analysis of their experiences, and identify strategies for action.

We easily could have concluded that popular education is seldom possible in our work with unions. Instead, we decided to keep exploring the elements of popular education that we could incorporate into our training programs. Rather than being concerned with whether or not a training program presents an opportunity to do "true" popular education, we have borrowed, adapted, and developed a wide array of popular education tools, including mapping, visual triggers, dialogues, and forum theater, for the needs of our participants.

Yet we constantly question ourselves about how we use these tools. It is all too easy to use an activity but not get at the purpose. We have to remind ourselves that popular education is more than simply using participatory, engaging activities. We ask ourselves questions such as:

- How can we start from the experiences of the workers?
- How can we include critical analysis of the root causes of safety and health problems?
- How do we make sure that we get to the stage of talking about action that can make the workplace safer and the union stronger?
- Will participants leave with more leadership skills? With more inspiration to fight for workplace justice?
- Are we challenging people to question their role in society/the workplace/the union and to take more control over their learning and their lives?

By asking ourselves questions, we do not necessarily end up with the perfect approach to popular education. Rather, we end up with more possibilities for empowerment than we would otherwise have. We are able to go further in some situations than others, and we can continue in this direction as we convince the unions we work with that training for action is valuable. We have been able to utilize at least a partial popular education approach to look at health and safety issues in a variety of situations.[4]

Participatory Action Research

We have found participatory action research to be particularly effective in addressing health and safety issues in the workplace. This method employs group processes in every aspect of a social or scientific research project. It seeks to involve the subjects of the research, such as workers and community members, as full participants in designing and conducting the research. This involvement gives the subjects ownership of the research and helps to ensure that the research results will be useful to them. Ideally the research process itself is transformative.[5]

LOHP initially used this approach with a local of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees in San Francisco. Room cleaners (also called guest room attendants or GRAs) from HERE Local 2 met over the course of one year to document their working conditions and health status. The information that was generated enabled the union to win a significant reduction in workloads, and these improvements were later written into the San Francisco workers' contract. The success of the San Francisco union inspired an HERE local in Las Vegas to initiate a similar project with LOHP.

The Las Vegas Room Cleaners' Study

The union's reasons for undertaking the new HERE study were twofold. First, the union suspected that the workload for the GRAs it represented had increased over time. There were also indications that GRAs were getting hurt on the job but not filing for workers' compensation. The union wanted to better understand this situation. Second, HERE wanted to use this opportunity to involve the workers in researching their own issues. In the process the workers would develop leadership skills and knowledge that would increase their participation in the work of the union.

The union, which had previously been dominated by American-born white men and women, was hoping that the research process would help transform the organization; and we, LOHP educators, were confident it would. The room cleaners (who make up 30 percent of the union's membership) are predominantly women of color, many non-English speaking, and many born outside the United States. This sector of the union was, up until recently, only loosely organized, with few shop stewards and committee leaders. As a result, their issues were not sufficiently communicated by the union to management. A transformation would develop leadership and a voice among the ranks of the room cleaners.

As the research project progressed, GRAs became stronger and more unified. They began to win significant victories in their individual hotels. The room cleaners completed a series of participatory research meetings. The information from these meetings was incorporated into a questionnaire to be used to survey approximately 1,300 GRAs. Findings from the survey have been instrumental in helping the union negotiate its current contract.

Participatory Research Activities

At the beginning of the project, LOHP facilitated a series of meetings with GRAs for three hours after work (dinner period included) over a seven-week period. Simultaneous translation was available, as 85 percent of the participants were Spanish speakers. The sessions' activities were aimed at identifying priority issues and gathering information, which was incorporated into the questionnaire. GRAs worked in small groups or pairs to:

1. **Identify GRA job duties.** The participants used index cards to compile a complete list of tasks necessary for completing a day's assignment. After a review of these tasks, small groups used red "sticky dots" to indicate which tasks were major problems, e.g., the task took a long time to complete, the task was physically strenuous, or the GRA did not have the proper tools or supplies to complete the task.
2. **Document where work assignments have increased.** A drawing of a "typical" hotel guest room was distributed to all the GRAs. They were asked to review the drawing, circle areas of the room where the work had increased, and write or draw an explanation. This was followed by a group discussion.
3. **Document how GRAs experience workplace stress.** Following a minitraining on chronic stress, GRAs reviewed a list of potential stressors in their jobs. Using "sticky dots," they identified which stressors caused them the most problems. In small groups, the GRAs then developed role-plays to show how they experienced these stressors on the job.
4. **Collect and analyze information about the chemicals used to clean the rooms.** GRAs were asked to bring a list of all the chemicals they used on the job, indicating the name of the product and the name and phone number of the company producing the product. After a training on how chemicals affect the body and on hazard communication, the group documented which chemicals were used in each hotel and the health hazards associated with these products.
5. **Identify the ergonomic risk factors associated with cleaning guest rooms.** The group took a field trip to the union GRA training center. There, members were divided up into four

training rooms set up to simulate actual guest rooms. The four groups were assigned to place Post-Its around each room in places where GRAs got hurt or felt pain when they worked. Once they finished placing their Post-Its, a staff person recorded the information by writing down what the GRAs said about each Post-It. Two videographers also filmed these report-backs. The GRAs reviewed the videos and compiled a thorough list of ergonomic risk factors involved in cleaning rooms.

Learning from Each Other

In the course of discussing GRA issues, the group sometimes arrived at a collective revelation. In popular education terminology, these are often called "Ah-ha!" moments. One such moment came up during a discussion about increased workload. GRAs discovered that each hotel practiced some type of incentive program to entice them to clean additional guest rooms during their shifts. Incentives included dinner tickets for one of the hotel dining rooms, "gift cards" that the GRA could redeem at the hotel gift shop, and two chances at winning $1,000 at the silver dollar slot machine. The majority of the hotels also paid $5 or $6 extra for each additional guest room cleaned.

One GRA stood to share her story. At her hotel, GRAs used to only clean fourteen rooms a day. Then the hotel started giving out the "gift cards" to get workers to clean fifteen rooms. Once it was established that the majority of GRAs were able to clean fifteen rooms, the hotel stopped handing out gift cards and fifteen rooms became the permanent daily assignment. This story touched a raw nerve and the group became angry. Something had to be done, but it was not clear at that moment what action to take.

At the next meeting a GRA raised her hand and asked to speak. She had been thinking about the hotel incentive program. She was worried about the long-term ramifications, so she had warned her coworkers that they could be setting themselves up. Instead of telling the workers to stop cleaning the additional room, she advised them to agree to "clean the additional room,

Courtesy Pam Tau Lee.

Hotel workers in a small group exercise during a union conference.

but only if it is overtime, with overtime pay!" Her coworkers understood and agreed to demand overtime. The participants cheered as they saw a solution that was fair and respectful of workers' rights.

The information about workload gathered by the GRA group was used to generate questions that were incorporated into the questionnaire:

- During your last workweek did you skip breaks, or take shorter breaks in order to clean additional rooms?
- How many additional rooms did you clean?
- Why did you do the extra rooms: additional pay, overtime pay, gifts, pressure from coworkers, pressure from supervisors, fear of discipline, points, or other penalties?

Role-Playing

Role-playing was another important technique used in the GRA meetings. In a discussion following a role-play that depicted stress on the job, a GRA commented, "because our English is not good, they think we don't have brains and we are not capable." GRAs expressed that they are made to feel inferior. The following scenarios performed by the group helped to illustrate this point:

A GRA is confronted by a supervisor at the end of a day:

Supervisor: It is almost 4 P.M. and you are still not finished. Why are you so slow?

GRA: The penthouses take a lot of time and they gave me an extra room, too.

Supervisor: You have been working here three years with us and you still don't know how to clean? You are so slow I can't believe it. New GRAs are much faster than that.

GRA: I'm sorry but I have so many dirty rooms today. You should send me some help to get finished.

Supervisor: Don't give me so many excuses. You are just too slow and maybe we have to send you somewhere else. I have to give you an evaluation.

A GRA is given many "rush" rooms. Another GRA who is finished offers to help but is denied the opportunity by the floor supervisor. The overwhelmed GRA calls to complain to the housekeeping department. The following phone conversation is played out:

Courtesy Pam Tau Lee

Pam Tau Lee at a hotel worker conference.

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GRA: I need help, but the floor supervisor will not allow it; can you help me?

Housekeeping: We are willing to talk to our maids, and you can come down and talk to me in English. We discuss everything in English, so you need to speak to me in English, okay?

GRA (feeling intimidated): That's all right, never mind. (Hangs up.)

At the end of the role-plays, GRAs commented, "I really liked tonight—I like to show everybody what the supervisors are like." "This is the first time I had an opportunity to show you (the union and the facilitator) what my work is like." The GRAs were very excited to see that problems that caused them stress on the job were not individual problems. What they were experiencing could be documented.

The GRAs and facilitator determined that the workers' concerns could be grouped into a few major categories: lack of control over the job, heavy workload, poor communication, warnings, and threats. Understanding that these situations were recognized by scientists, health specialists, and the government to be job-design stressors, the GRAs felt their concerns were valid. They began to think about solutions that could benefit all GRAs.

In the survey, questions about language difficulty were incorporated into standardized questions dealing with stress. Respondents were asked if the following statements are true for them or not:

- I am required to speak and understand English when I talk with my superiors at work.
- In meetings with my supervisor, I receive instructions and assignments that are clear and easy to understand.
- I receive all information about changes to personnel policies and rules in writing and in a language I can read or understand.

Accidents on the Job

The session focusing on workplace injury and pain confirmed the need for the employer to provide a safe and healthy workplace. GRAs need to work at a fast pace and rush to meet their job assignments. Some hotels blame the workers for their injuries and often require workers to take a drug test. As one GRA reported, "When we get hurt, we call the supervisor, she calls down to the housekeeping department, and they call security. The security person has us fill out the accident report. When I got hurt, I had to take a drug test before they let me go to the clinic. I was also suspended for three days, but my test was negative so I got three days back pay. Still, Risk Management put a safety violation in my file."

Another said, "My arm was broken and I still had to wait thirty minutes before security came and had me fill out the report. Then I went to the clinic, but the doctor told me he had no cast for my broken arm. I had to go to the hospital."

A third said, "They wanted me to come back and work but I was still on crutches and in pain. I used my vacation days because I could not work. Now five years later I still cannot kneel down to clean the floors, and they won't give me a mop to clean and dry the floor."

As a result, questions regarding injuries and workers' compensation were also incorporated into the questionnaire.

If you reported an injury or illness in the last year, please answer the following questions:

Did you take a drug test when you reported the injury or illness?

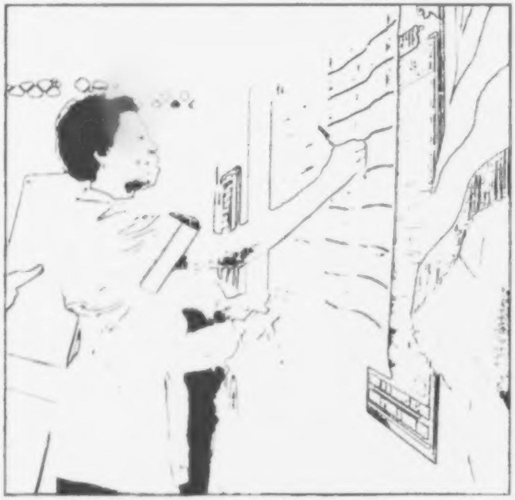
Did you get taken to a health care provider or clinic?

Did you get well before you returned to work?

Did you get a warning or discipline points for missing work?

Morale

Another set of issues raised at the research meetings addressed the positive side of working as a GRA. GRAs feel pride when they close the door behind them and know that the room is clean and properly stocked. They like the responsibility and independence of the job. Receiving appreciation from guests in the form of tips and compliments also makes the GRAs feel good. While the wages and benefits need improvement, GRAs are able to provide a decent living for their families. Others pointed out that getting along well with their coworkers also makes the job enjoyable. Finally, the GRAs liked being a member of the union: "We feel strong."



Courtesy Pam Tau Lee.

A union member helps develop campaign strategy.

On the other hand, complaints about the lack of respect by supervisors, pressure to work fast and do more work, poor communication on the part of management, and lack of appreciation for a job well done made the job hard and stressful. "When I go to sleep, I dream about cleaning the rooms. The pressure stays with me. I feel tense. It is not good." "They look down on us. They treat us like animals. No respect."

These feelings were expressed over and over by GRAs at the first couple of participatory research sessions. Beginning with the second session, the facilitator would regularly ask the group to share comments that would make the group feel strong and more united.

Organizing Victories

The following reports from the workers who have been involved in the research project illustrate the GRAs' progress as they developed leadership skills and began to win small victories in their hotels.

"Now I know what to talk about when I get back to work."

An African American GRA reported, "I recruited a Bosnian GRA to communicate with other Bosnian GRAs. We always had problems communicating with them about the union and about our rights."

"Because I speak up better as a shop steward, the manager made sure to introduce me to the new hires. That never happened before."

"We think about our jobs and talk more about making them better. We feel good about our job and are learning to demand respect."

"I can report that now, I think we have reduced the number of GRAs who are not taking their breaks from 70 percent to maybe 10 percent."

"Based on what I learned about the chemicals and germs, we told the housekeeping department we did not want to store the cleaning sponges in our lockers anymore. We also got new sponges and gloves."

"We complained about our uniform. We do not like to wear skirts when we clean and we wanted pants instead. Well we finally got what we wanted, and now we can also wear pants."

"Every day I get together with coworkers. Yesterday I was late and they were waiting for me. Today I recruited several people to meet with our group at lunch."

"Before we only had a handful of interested people; now we are over ninety-five."

Several GRAs reported that they are more confident about table talking to other GRAs during breakfast and breaks. Others talked about setting up a system where there is a GRA on each floor who can share the information with her coworkers.

Courtesy Pam Tau Lee.

Hotel workers discuss the role of the union in their workplace.

The process of planning the study alone had an enormous impact on the workers involved, as well as on the union. According to the union leadership, "Each week several of our largely immigrant, predominantly Latina housekeepers would grow through the focus group experience. Decision making, discussion, and involvement with analyzing the problems empowered a whole new group of union leaders. We had no idea focus groups could truly bring forward a new set of union leaders! In the future we want to utilize this same process in some fashion to advance more of a voice to immigrant women in other departments."[6]

Research in Action

The next phase in the Las Vegas project would have been to finalize the research questionnaire and actually administer the survey to some two thousand workers. The information from the survey was intended to assist the union in negotiating the next contract. However, HERE was deeply affected by the events of September 11, 2001. The industry conducted massive layoffs. Over the next quarter the union had to put the survey on hold and turn its attention to the pressing financial needs of its members. GRAs and other workers mobilized and set up a food bank and other much needed services. By February 2002 the hotels slowly began to call back workers, though business was rebounding at a quicker pace than were the recalls.

As the GRAs began to return to work, the union got word that recalled workers were doing the work of two people. The GRA survey was again made a priority. GRAs went into action by recruiting for hotel committees and mobilizing for the survey. The researchers and the union set a goal of a 60 percent participation rate for the survey. GRAs from each of the five hotels selected to participate in the survey volunteered as survey captains. They met with coworkers to explain the purpose of the survey and invite them to participate.

To ensure equal opportunity for all GRAs to participate, the research team administered the survey after work hours and in two waves. The survey was translated into Spanish and Serbo-Croatian. To accommodate the many workers who spoke other languages—including Thai, Lao, Tagalog, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), and Russian—researchers recruited bilingual research assistants from the University of Nevada and the Community College of Southern Nevada as well as GRAs from nonparticipating hotels. Ultimately, 941 GRAs completed the survey at a 74 percent participation rate. After the survey was conducted, the findings were compiled by Dr. Niklas Krause, a professor at the University of California at San Francisco.

On May 16, 2002, union members numbering 18,654 turned out to vote "yes"—versus 877 who voted "no"—to strike if the hotels did not agree to union demands that they preserve workers' health and welfare benefits and address GRA workload issues. The hotel prepared for the strike by trying to intimidate workers. At one hotel twenty-three workers were fired for wearing red ribbons in solidarity with the GRAs. One cook and four GRAs were roughed up by hotel security while conducting a break-time meeting to discuss GRA issues. On May 20, 2002, the GRA survey findings were presented to the employers and to the union. A partial list of findings follows:

- Seventy-four percent of the workforce turned out to take the survey.
- Eighty-five percent of the participants were born outside of the United States.
- Sixty-six percent of GRAs skipped lunch or took shorter breaks in order to complete their room assignments.
- The workload has increased in fifteen areas, including cleaning large glass mirrors and doors, collecting garbage, and dusting.
- In the survey's measure of overall health status, GRAs obtained a score of thirty-nine versus the general U.S. population's score of seventy-six.
- More than 78 percent of GRAs report work-related pain, but only 21 percent made a formal complaint with the hotel or with workers' compensation.
- Eighty percent had taken medication for pain they had at work during the last four weeks.[7]

In short, the workload had increased, workers were hurt and sick, and they were experiencing high levels of physical and emotional stress on the job. GRAs responded to the findings with great enthusiasm. One said, "This information gives me the ammunition to push for our demands and get our members to fight."

By May 31, 2002, the day before the union strike deadline, all of the major hotel companies made tentative settlements that provide GRAs with health and welfare benefits for the next five years and substantial work reductions. This is a major victory, and participatory research played a vital role in making it possible. The research provided much needed information that could be used to educate and mobilize workers and to support them in their negotiations with employers.

Conclusion

LOHP has certainly not been alone in our efforts to bring a popular education approach to worker health and safety. In 1999 a group of more than thirty worker health and safety educators from around the country met at the Highlander Center in Tennessee to explore our understanding of popular education. We shared experiences and tools, and discussed opportunities for and challenges in using popular education in our work. Since that time, a group has continued to meet annually in conjunction with the American Public Health Association. In addition, a new e-mail group has been established to facilitate exchange of methods, experiences, and strategies.[8] Among the important strategy questions we grapple with are:

1. How do we encourage more health and safety educators to take an empowerment approach to training?
2. How do we encourage the labor movement to understand health and safety as a union building issue, rather than as a technical-service issue?
3. How do we join with others to encourage the integration of popular education throughout the labor movement?

These meetings have been inspiring; we all leave with a desire to continue to exchange ideas and information and to work together with labor educators in other fields to open more doors for popular education in the labor movement.

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[1] The Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) is a labor education program based at the School of Public Health at the University of California Berkeley. Our mission is to provide training, information, and technical assistance to workers and to the unions and community organizations that serve them. For more information, go to the website at http://www.lohp.org.

[2] For more on the relationship between labor education, adult education, and popular education in health and safety, see Nina Wallerstein and Robin Baker, "Labor Education Programs in Health and Safety," *Occupational Safety and Health*, vol. 9 of *Occupational Medicine: State of the Art Reviews* (April–June 1994).

[3] Nina Wallerstein, C. Piller, and Robin Baker, "Labor Educator's Health and Safety Manual," Labor Occupational Health Program, Univ. of California Berkeley (1981).

[4] For example, members of the Operating Engineers who handled solid waste wanted protection from unsafe machinery, back and shoulder injuries, hazardous chemicals, and speedup, all issues in their campaign for a union contract. We helped workers "map" the hazards, identify recommendations, and document management indifference. This collective knowledge helped the workers to mobilize their coworkers, challenge the boss at captive audience meetings, and address county officials and the media to win support for their case. We also developed a train-the-trainer program with the Southwest Network for Economic and Environmental Justice to bridge the gap between workplace issues and the community. The program was offered simultaneously in four languages for grassroots groups in Latino, Asian, and Native American communities. It provided a forum to understand the relationship between workplace hazards—workers of color are concentrated in the dirtiest, most dangerous jobs—and community environmental issues, and laid the groundwork for some important new alliances between labor and the environmental justice movement.

[5] For more on participatory action research, see L. W. Green et al., "Study of Participatory Research in Health Promotion: Review and Recommendations for the Development of Participatory Research in Health Promotion in Canada," Royal Society of Canada, Ottawa, 1995; R. S. Hagey, "The Use and Abuse of Participatory Action Research" *Chronic Disease of Canada* 18, no. 1 (1997); Madeleine Scammell and Allen Dearry, *Advancing the Community-Driven Research Agenda: Conference Report* (Research Triangle Park, N.C.: National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, October 27, 1997).

[6] D. Taylor, interview by the author, HERE Local 226, Las Vegas, Nev.

[7] N. Krause, P. T. Lee, T. Scherzer, R. Rugulies, P. L. Sinnott, and Robin L. Baker, "Health and Working Conditions of Guest Room Attendants in Las Vegas Hotels," report for the Culinary Workers Union Local 226, June 15, 2002, 1–112. Available at http://socrates.berkeley.edu/-lohp/In_The_Spotlight/in_the_spotlight.html.

[8] To subscribe to the e-mail group, e-mail to popednetwork-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

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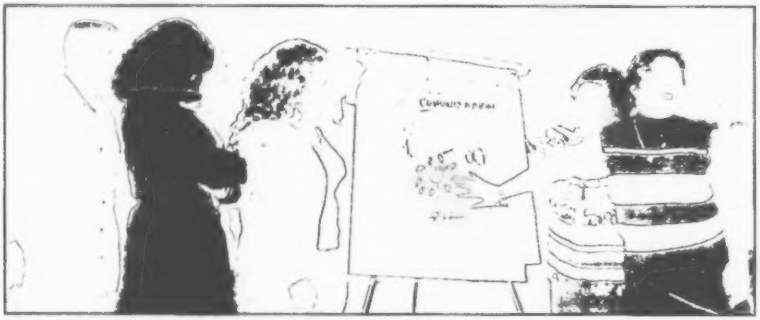

Courtesy Katarina Davis Del Valle.

Empowering the Members' Voice: SEIU Leadership Development

By Katarina Davis Del Valle

Deepening our union education work beyond merely using participatory methodology is the next frontier of popular education in the labor movement. To do so, we as labor educators must be willing to develop open and safe learning environments that value and utilize differences and conflict. We must also challenge ourselves to share power with learners and take risks to advance leadership among union staff and members.

In this article, I discuss the process of creating a popular education model designed to promote the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) "Members' Voice" program among union staff. I contrast it with the previous year's training, which used a different approach to reach the same goal—promoting a major role change among local union staff representatives.

The Context

In 1995, the AFL-CIO, led by newly elected President John Sweeney, faced the challenge of declining union density and the loss of labor's economic and political power. The U.S. labor movement understood it was in crisis; to prevent fatal setbacks in the standards we had fought to achieve labor had to "organize or die." Unions would have to shift significant resources into new organizing and find ways to continue to provide strong representation for current members. To do so, SEIU and other unions took up the challenge of building worksite power among members and developing staff skills to support new member leaders.

Many SEIU local union leaders began to look for ways to transition from a staff-driven, contract-enforcement model of union representation to a member/leader-driven, "empowered" workplace. In order for members to develop as leaders, however, union staff would need to let go of some traditional roles. In many cases, staff had acted as "super stewards" who filed grievances for members and mobilized members' participation in union activities outside of the workplace. But if members were to increase their collective power on the job, they needed to develop their own ability to resolve problems. Staff in turn needed to develop a set of new roles as organizers, mentors, educators, advisors, and leadership developers.

Members in some locals were already acting as leaders on the job, in hospitals and clinics, in the Justice for Janitors' campaign, in city and county agencies throughout the country. They were mobilizing their coworkers to confront injustices, handling grievances at all levels, and organizing political action campaigns. Staff roles were beginning to expand.

In some cases, however, this emerging leadership among the members was perceived as disempowering to the staff representatives, or "reps." Many reps had come from the rank and file. They saw their positions as natural promotions after having served as stewards for many years and taken care of their coworkers' grievances. They were deeply invested in the paralegal skills they had developed and took a strong role in responding to grievances. The result was a kind of business unionism where the members paid their dues to what they experienced as a third party, which would then fix their problems. The time was ripe to develop a strategic program for representatives in the locals, one that would support organizing, build political power, and build workplace power through member leadership and mobilization.

Members' Voice

To do so, SEIU developed an initiative called "Members Voice" and launched a staff skills training program, which was charged with rolling it out in a big way. As a labor educator who had formerly been an SEIU member and then an SEIU rep, I was excited to be serving as trainer and to be involved in developing the curriculum. In 1998 a blue-ribbon panel of local union staff who had had a positive experience with role changes spoke to a group of almost one hundred participants. Participants ranged from brand new inexperienced staff to veterans heavily invested in the old ways. Surely, we thought, our own enthusiasm for transforming their roles would be contagious! No doubt they would read the recommendations, listen attentively to the presenters, and roll up their sleeves, ready to absorb new skills and understandings.

The curriculum used in these four-day workshops had already proven effective in some cases. It included elements traditionally associated with popular education: stories from participants' peers, and participatory and engaging activities. However, insufficient attention was given to open discussions of the impact Members' Voice would have on the role of union staff. So discussions happened informally, in conversations that often appeared to maximize rumors, fears, and insecurities. Between sessions there was a lot of buzz between some of the reps—albeit a minority—who were suspicious that this was a way to get rid of the old people, particularly those who had come from the rank and file. Even participants who didn't share those fears felt that their own professional development would be hindered. Many feared that their roles, what they had accomplished so far, were being devalued. Several participants valued the approach and rallied enthusiastically, but the majority were confused and uncertain, and another minority actively resisted. By then, the training's very structure, or lack thereof, had failed to set a healthy tone of open discussion.

The stakes were high. We as educators strongly believed in the Members' Voice approach to union work. But the hybrid nature of this particular training was soon apparent to us: the training was a promotion of a major policy change, yet it strove to be education about how to empower member leaders. We quickly drew up a plan that included more open facilitation and less explicit promotion of the new model. We did manage to redirect course. But we were left with unanswered questions. What could we do differently next time?

A New Approach to Training

Our target date for the next training was September 1999. We'd learned our lessons. This time we thought out of the proverbial box, planned, and prepared. We had come to understand, the hard way, that education has to be an open and (relatively) safe space to do the unencumbered thinking and feeling necessary to consider real behavioral change.

The organizational and educational goal of the 1999 training was still the same: to achieve acceptance of and commitment to the Members' Voice model of staff representation at the worksite. Member leadership was as key as it ever was to transforming union power on the job and beyond, in politics and in organizing.

Courtesy SEIU.

Katarina Davis Del Valle and Nilda Torres lead popular education workshop in Puerto Rico.

We decided to structure in a lack of structure. In the spirit of popular education, at the end of each of the four days, participants would name their collective questions and concerns to be discussed the following day. Facilitators had to be ready for whatever might emerge. It was still possible that resistance to change might win the day. Yet we knew that the only way we could lead change in such a potentially resistant learning environment was to rely fully on the experience and points of view of the participants. We needed to hear them out and honor what we heard. And we needed to lead from their reality.

Structured into the training was time for the participants to formulate the questions they cared about and the concerns they had. Individual participants shared personal experiences with similar role changes. Suddenly, the facilitator was no longer an authority figure. Anyone who had tried to change her or his role in the field, faced peer pressure or member pressure, and forged ahead to train members to empower themselves was of great value in the room. Success stories and challenge stories helped make the discussion real. And mixing and matching participants in small group discussions assured the exchange of a variety of experiences.

The results were remarkable. In evaluations, participants commented on the "lively and meaningful exchange of real feelings" and remarked that, "it was okay to say how you really felt." We now understand that it is not always best to seek expressions of unquestioning support. Change often involves controversy and conflict. As Myles Horton, in his autobiography, *The Long Haul*, reflects:

> George Bernard Shaw once said that you only begin to solve a problem when you have two people who believe passionately in something state opposite views. That way you bring the thing out in the open. In a workshop, conflict gets the whole group involved. You don't even try to referee between two people. At this point the whole group takes over the discussion, since the problem being debated is everyone's problem. And when this happens, everyone discovers that the issue is not as simple as the two people have stated it, and a lot of the complications get aired.[1]

Why did the second training succeed while the first failed? Both programs were participatory, but only the second gave learners a genuine role in fashioning the educational experience and defining the issues to be addressed. In the second, reps were deeply involved in goal planning and curriculum development. Trainers created a safe environment in which differences of opinion could be openly expressed, and conflict was facilitated in productive ways. Critical thinking was highly valued throughout the curriculum and during ongoing evaluation.

In the ensuing years, we have witnessed significant shifts in several major locals, with staff and members embracing the Members' Voice vision. SEIU local leaders have evaluated the training as a significant factor in this programmatic change. Our experience illustrates that moving union program goals through education need not conflict with a facilitator's genuine openness to real differences of opinion. Leadership from educators can make the difference.

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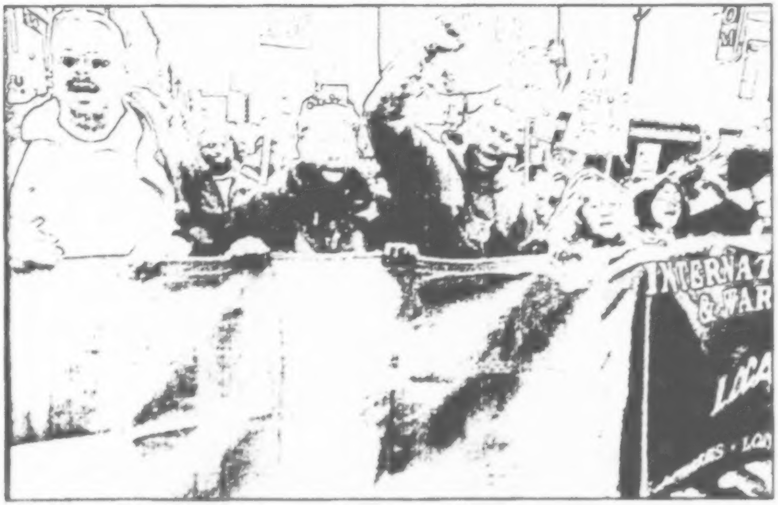
[1] Myles Horton, *The Long Haul: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, 1990).

Labor-Community Alliances



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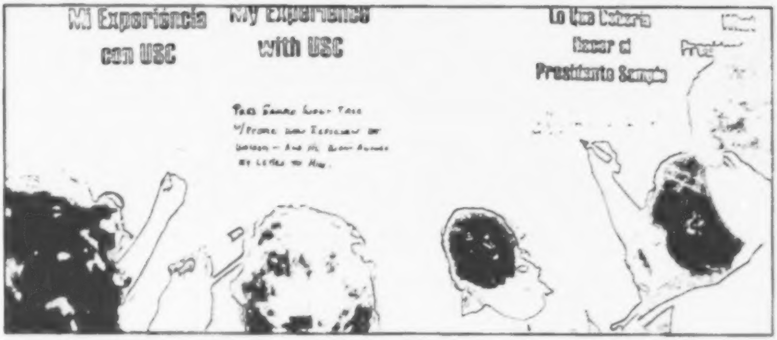

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Economic Justice in the Los Angeles Figueroa Corridor

By Gilda Haas

Coalition Wins Watershed Agreement

On May 31, 2001, the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice came to an historic agreement with the L.A. Arena Land Company, owned by billionaires Rupert Murdoch and Phillip Anschutz, to provide living wage jobs, local hiring, affordable housing, and parks as part of the four-million-square-foot "Sports and Entertainment District" expansion of the Los Angeles Staples Center.

"I've never heard of an agreement that's as comprehensive as this," said Greg LeRoy, director of Good Jobs First, a national clearinghouse that tracks the public benefits of economic development projects. "What's unusual here is that housing, employment, and open space provisions are all together—it's really a model."[1]

The breadth of the agreement is a reflection of the diversity within the Figueroa Corridor Coalition, which is comprised of economic and environmental justice organizations, trade unions, block clubs, housing organizations, student groups, and churches. Getting the agreement signed involved collaboration between more than three hundred local residents, thirty diverse organizations, and five labor unions, each playing a unique role in the process.

The organization responsible for convening, staffing, and managing the coalition is Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE), a popular education and economic justice organization that is committed to building economic power for working-class people in Los Angeles. This article examines the role and promise of popular education in SAJE's economic justice work, using the Staples campaign as an example. I will begin with a description of the Staples campaign, provide a brief

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practitioner's definition of popular education, and provide examples of popular education tools that have been incorporated into the work of the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice.

Background

In 1998, SAJE convened residents, religious institutions, workers, students, community organizations, and labor unions into the Coalition for a Responsible USC (the University of Southern California, the largest private employer in Los Angeles, and the largest property owner in the South Central L.A. neighborhood where SAJE is located).

The impetus to form the coalition was twofold. On the labor front, Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) Local 11 had represented food and service workers on the campus for more than thirty years yet could not get a contract signed for the past five. On the community front, many residents viewed the university as a hostile force that sought to transform their working-class community of color into an elite college town. The sting of public redevelopment programs that had destroyed neighborhood businesses and housing two decades earlier was still felt in the neighborhood, and residents were offended that the university perceived its working-class minority neighborhood as a threat rather than an asset. Landlocked, the university now owned more than one hundred properties off campus and was actively involved in schemes for campus expansion and downtown development, without any significant community participation.

The new coalition devised a strategy that consolidated the labor and community concerns. The immediate goal was to win a fair contract for the 350 food and service workers and in the process, build a permanent community-labor organization—one that could make the university accountable to worker and community needs over the long term. The strategy not only anticipated the need for community support in future labor struggles, it also acknowledged the fact that thousands of union members—food and service workers, home care workers, and janitors—lived in the neighborhood and shared the broader community concerns.

At around the same time, a few miles north of USC, the city's redevelopment agency had used its powers of eminent domain to assemble a large parcel of land to accommodate the development of the Staples Center and its large surface parking lots. Two hundred families were displaced in the process. The Staples Center opened in 1999 and soon after became the home of the Lakers, the Grammys, and the 2000 Democratic National Convention. To corporate investors and downtown boosters alike, the stadium's success raised hopes that a much larger redevelopment agenda could also succeed in the area.

Community concerns were raised during the development of the Staples Center. Residents who were being displaced to make way for the new arena worked with Inquilinos Unidos, a tenants' rights organization, to obtain the relocation benefits that they were due. Living wage activists from the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy met with Staples to negotiate for fair wages on the site. Several unions worked separately to obtain contracts for their members. A small neighborhood organization even filed a successful lawsuit based on the project's environmental impact. However, these efforts were isolated from each other, and as a result, their collective impact was less than the sum of the parts. Most of the groups involved were not aware of the others' efforts. As a result, when the Staples Center was built the developers got a lot from the city in terms of subsidies and entitlements. Residents and workers got relatively little.

Midway through its successful campaign for a food and service workers' contract, the Coalition for a Responsible USC heard that property owners and wealthy investors were developing big plans for the Figueroa Corridor—a new name for the forty-block strip that stretches from the now famous Staples Center on the north side, to USC, to the L.A. Coliseum on the south. The object of the plan was to turn Figueroa into a high-end "Sports and Entertainment Corridor"—with virtually no consideration for the 200,000 working-class people who lived in the surrounding neighborhoods. Realizing that the development pressures on the community were much greater than anyone had thought, the USC coalition expanded its mission and membership and became the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice.

The coalition's first steps in the summer of 2000 involved door-to-door contact with hundreds of tenants who lived in the apartment buildings across the street from the Staples Center, reconvening families that had been displaced by the arena, and bringing local organizations that served the primarily immigrant population in the community into the coalition. This time, when the L.A. Arena Land Company announced its plans to build a high-end sports and entertainment complex that included a forty-five–story convention-center hotel, a 7,000-seat theater, upscale housing, restaurants, night clubs, and bars—the community was prepared. This time the developers were met with a level of community-labor unity that was unprecedented in Los Angeles.

The new project would place four million square feet of buildings on the parking lots that the redevelopment agency had previously assembled for the Staples Center. The project's size and complexity required many land-use approvals from the city: an environmental impact report, a specific plan, conditional use permits—actions that might typically take the city two years to process and that included multiple public hearings. This drawn-out process simply did not work for the developers. Their project already had the strong support of then-Mayor Richard Riordan and several key city council members, all of whom had exhausted their term limits and would be replaced by new elected officials before the year was up. The developers planned instead to fast-track the project and obtain the approvals they needed before the new officials took office. A cadre of lobbyists, lawyers, and planning consultants were brought on board to move the project forward. However, the developers also knew that any substantial organized opposition would slow things down. In fact, to meet the developers' goal, the project really needed organized community support.

Thus, the developer's need for speed became the coalition's leverage to fashion a complicated community-labor bargaining table. The L.A. County Federation of Labor, which had learned a lot from its previous experience with the Staples Center, coalesced the five affected unions—Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the Operating Engineers, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), and the Teamsters—into an "all for one, one for all" bargaining team in which no one would sign an agreement until everyone had an agreement to sign. The Figueroa Corridor Coalition, which included two of the five unions, HERE and SEIU, struggled to quickly integrate its members' diverse concerns, knowledge, and experience into a shared set of standards for the new development. The resulting demands related to jobs, housing, and other community needs and became known as the "Community Benefits Package." Since affected tenants had become an important part of the organization, the coalition's program also demanded that previous injuries resulting from Staples development—displacement and reduced quality of life—be redressed before any new project was built.

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Participants at a SAJE workshop discuss campaign strategies.

After a rocky start in building a relationship with the developer (Tim Lieweke, President of the Anschutz Entertainment Group and Staples Center, failed to show up at the first two community meetings attended by hundreds of residents), the coalition initiated a three-month negotiation process with the L.A. Arena Company by presenting the community demands. Each session was attended by a team of coalition negotiators who could speak to the substance of each demand, a representative from the unions' separate bargaining teams, and Spanish-speaking residents from the neighborhood who kept their neighbors apprised of the coalition's progress.[2]

This process was grounded in the basic principle of unity between the coalition members, the five unions, and a growing constituency of tenant activists. For example, when labor negotiations went sour, the coalition took up the issue so the developer would understand that workers' concerns were also community concerns. And, when the coalition's negotiations on affordable housing hit a brick wall, the unions took up that issue, letting the company know that affordable housing was an important issue for union members as well.

Once the negotiating process began, grassroots resident leaders mobilized their neighbors to lobby city council members and commissioners, to turn out at community meetings and public hearings, and to educate others about the importance of the effort. They were a dominant presence in all public forums and gradually transformed the coalition from an amalgam of organizations to one that also included individual members. The Figueroa Corridor Coalition was now an organization that not only galvanized the organized but organized the unorganized as well.

Critical to this process of creating a democratic community-labor organization that builds up people, power, and possibilities in Los Angeles over the long haul is a popular education approach.

What Is Popular Education?

Popular education is education for a genuine democracy. It provides tools for collectivizing knowledge and experience around shared problems, for analyzing power and structural dynamics, and for democratically devising solutions and actions to attain those solutions. It is important, however, not to confuse popular education's tools with popular education's purpose to produce social change for a more democratic and equitable society. With this end in mind, popular education must always include an action component, for it is only through collective action that social change can occur. And it is only through collective reflection and analysis of those actions that we continue to learn and to build our movement.

In the Figueroa Corridor, as in many other quarters, this goal of democratic, collective learning presents ongoing challenges to the organization-building process. How do we build democratic organization across cultural and language divisions, across a diverse spectrum of formal education levels, across organizations that range from all-volunteer efforts to those that have large professional staffs? Once we've figured out a two-year process for meeting this challenge, what do we do when our work takes us into a short-term campaign that severely compresses the time available for relationship building, decision making, discourse, and learning?

There is no simple formula for this common dilemma, and the solution often lies in our organization's perspective. We take a long-term view on what it takes to make change, build organization, and build leaders. We create opportunities for people who are not prepared to lead today to work side by side with those who are, in order to build tomorrow's leadership. We build education into everything we do and understand that everyone has something to teach and something to learn. We survive the tensions of our differences during the heat of a campaign by keeping the faith that in the near future our shared experience will produce new common bonds and take us to a new level of solidarity.

With these ideas in mind, what follows are a few illustrations of how SAJE has employed popular education to build and sustain the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice.

Building a Collective Picture of Knowledge and Experience: Interactive Visual Tools

A hallmark of popular education is the value placed on experiential knowledge. SAJE usually engages a new group (or an old group with a new problem) by building a collective picture of the knowledge and experience that is already present in the room. To facilitate discussions of this kind, SAJE uses visual tools—a chart, a map, a drawing—to help the group literally create a collective picture that can be used as a shared reference point for the discussion and as a starting point for future discussions. Two examples, the "Wall of Shame" and "Big Map," are described in this article.

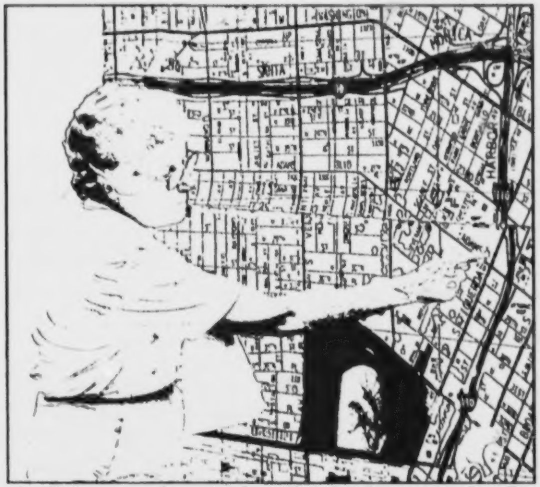
Wall of Shame

Prior to establishing the Figueroa Corridor Coalition, SAJE and HERE organized its precursor, the Coalition for a Responsible USC, whose purpose was to make the university accountable to the needs of its workers and local residents. SAJE was familiar with HERE's battle for a union contract at USC and also worked with community leaders who had long-term concerns about the university's role in the community. A meeting was called between diverse parties from local churches, unions, and community organizations, many of whom worked within a ten-block radius of each other but had never been in the same room before.

The vehicle for facilitating this first discussion later became known as the "Wall of Shame." Here, a large wall was covered with butcher paper and was divided into a timeline. Participants were given twenty minutes to approach the wall and record the injuries that they had suffered at the hands of the university decade by decade. In twenty minutes the butcher paper was completely covered with writing: broken promises, unfair labor practices, racial discrimination. Participants then discussed their contributions and gradually began to recognize a collective claim for justice—one that had deep roots in local history. Around a year afterwards, these participants became the founding members of the Coalition for a Responsible USC.

Big Map

When the leaders of the Coalition for a Responsible USC learned of plans for the larger Figueroa



Coalition members analyze the development plan for the Figueroa Corridor.

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Corridor, they called a meeting to decipher what stake we all had in the matter. This time the wall at SAJE was covered with an enormous map of the Figueroa Corridor. For two years, most large convenings of the Figueroa Corridor Coalition involved the use of this map, which soon became tattered from constant use.

Each participant was provided with markers and paper images that represented various types of engagement in the area (current constituencies or projects, future campaigns, and plans), and all the leaders were asked to locate their commitments on the map. Like the Wall of Shame, the map was quickly covered with dense information, in this case about union organizing targets, nonprofit housing plans, tenant organizing campaigns, and more. In debriefing the map, participants learned about each other's work and could see their shared long-term interest in the Figueroa Corridor. Thus began their gradual transition to a larger coalition with a broader membership and mission.

The Big Map has had various lives. It has been used to collect personal stories about gentrification pressures and stories of broken promises by development agencies. It has been used to locate the holdings of the area's largest property owners, large development projects, and sites of important campaigns. Eventually, much of this information was consolidated into the map depicted above, which now serves as the Figueroa Corridor Coalition's brochure and is used daily as an outreach and education tool. Coalition organizers and activists use the map as a reference to help describe the coalition and its history, the economic pressures affecting the community, and the contested ground—the Staples Center, redevelopment districts, plans for a USC basketball stadium—that forms the basis of our campaigns. The map is used in house meetings with immigrant tenants, in presentations to elected officials, and in discussions with corporate executives—in all cases with considerable effect.

Creating a Common Foundation of Knowledge: Live Illustration

Even the consolidated experience of many leaders is not enough to produce effective campaigns. The coalition's democratic structure also brings with it a level of intellectual responsibility. Our leaders must be knowledgeable enough about the tools of power and economic analysis to make informed decisions.

Processes like the Wall of Shame or Big Map often yield a list of questions about what we need to learn before we build a strategy for change. Answers to these questions often rest in the details of obscure agencies, procedures, and points of law. A basic understanding of these relevant facts must be available to all of our decision makers regardless of their formal education background, country of origin, or technical training. One tool for accomplishing this objective is the live illustration.

One of the unique results of the Staples expansion campaign was that residents who had been displaced and relocated by the redevelopment agency became leading activists. A chapter that was considered closed by public officials was now reopened, and these residents eventually obtained the support of not only the broad coalition, but of the L.A. Arena Company itself. To get to this point, organizers, tenant leaders, and other activists needed to learn about the economic and political structure of redevelopment, how eminent domain works, and some basic information about our opponents.

In live illustrations, participants, guided by a narrator-facilitator, use playful props to create visual and physical images of the economic and political structures and relationships that underlie our experiences and that are not necessarily apparent. For example, to illustrate the redevelopment scheme some participants were asked to play the role of L.A. Arena Company owners. They were provided with hats on which the net worth of the player—Phillip Anschutz, Rupert Murdoch, Ed Roski, or Tim Lieweke—was prominently displayed. Easily recognizable corporate logos of each character's personal holdings—sports teams, communication enterprises, and media empires—were stuck to their clothing for all to see. Other participants were given cardboard buildings painted with a number that represented the displaced families. Another volunteer representing the redevelopment agency was instructed to knock the buildings down, but only after still other participants enacted a city council vote guided by cue cards. Through live illustration, difficult subject matter that is typically presented in lecture format became an active and experiential learning moment produced by audience and facilitator alike.

Successful live illustrations do not "dumb down" technical information. They instead command attention through participation, make the invisible structures behind our experience visible, and physically illustrate political and economic relationships. Because illustrations require significant preparation and clear choices regarding what people need to know, facilitators need to conduct their own research and self-education. When the process is effective it is well worth that investment of time. The payoff is an informed leadership that can explain complex subject matter to their families, neighbors, and colleagues, reflecting the understanding gained through the live illustration.

Participatory Research and Planning

As is the case with many organizing victories, once the battle is won the work has just begun. This is certainly true for the Figueroa Corridor Coalition, which successfully negotiated an agreement that the majority of jobs produced by the new development would be living wage and union and that at least half of the five thousand permanent jobs would go to local residents. In addition, the developer committed to building affordable housing for the families of low-wage workers in the Figueroa Corridor. At face value, the agreement appears to be a significant contribution to community economic development of our community.

But things are not that simple. Coalition staff are painfully aware that the barriers that keep our members stuck in low-wage work—inadequate education and training, discrimination, lack of English-language skills, unreliable transportation, inadequate childcare, immigration status, to name a few—are not adequately addressed by existing employment programs. They felt that they had a lot to learn to ensure that the agreement would really benefit their members.

On the housing front, the successful agreement had an unintended and unwanted impact. The city council's approval of the Staples Center expansion sent a powerful signal to property owners and investors that the Figueroa Corridor was ripe for a tremendous jump in value. The market response to this signal was immediate, hyperbolic, and pervasive, throwing the community into turmoil and instability. Instances of illegal evictions, harassment, and discrimination multiplied as real estate speculators tried to empty buildings of their working-class tenants to make way for higher-income students and professionals. The need to build a wall of resistance to impending displacement and gentrification became paramount, and coalition members were anxious to learn about precedents in other communities.

With the support of a project funded by the University of California Institute for Labor and Employment, a participatory research process became part and parcel of the coalition's strategy to create a "Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors" campaign. A UCLA graduate student identified examples of successful local hiring and antigentrification efforts from around the country and presented them to the coalition's jobs and housing committees, who looked for examples that resonated most with their experience. Input from the committees helped the coalition locate organizations with the "best practices" worth learning more about. In April 2002, a research team of nine coalition organizers and committee activists—including a union vice president, a neighborhood minister, a local health promoter, and two Spanish-speaking tenants—got on a plane and met with leaders of exemplary programs in New York and Massachusetts.

For coalition leaders, it was immediately apparent that conducting the interviews themselves instead of employing an academic or professional research approach had many advantages. Tenants were able to meet with tenants from other barrios. A union leader became immersed in housing questions and solutions and was able to bring his own knowledge of training programs to the local hiring discussions. Coalition leaders were able to build stronger bonds between one another as they traveled, shared meals, and shared perspectives.

Another unanticipated benefit was that the coalition members were able to view their organization through the admiring eyes of others; everyone they met with in New York and Massachusetts had heard of the Figueroa Corridor Coalition's recent success, was very impressed, and wanted to learn more. The Figueroa Corridor Coalition had become a "best practice" too. Thus the conversations during site visits took on a reciprocal tone, with both visitors and hosts interested in continuing the relationship.

Upon their return, the research team presented the results of the meetings to larger assemblies of the coalition, adding a new and deeper dimension to strategic thinking about the work ahead.

Learning to Plan and Planning to Learn

When the results of the Figueroa Corridor Coalition agreement with the L.A. Arena Land Company hit the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*, the president of Los Angeles Trade Technical College, a community college located in the Figueroa Corridor, responded by immediately offering the college as a resource to the coalition. The college would tailor courses such as English as a second language, trade skills, and computer training to help prepare students for the local hiring provisions of the agreement.

The coalition was not yet prepared to develop a curriculum for a local hiring program. It was, after all, only a few days after the completed negotiation, and permanent jobs would not be available for at least a couple of years. But rather than turning down the offer of resources, coalition organizers tried to figure out a way to turn the situation into an opportunity to develop a popular education and leadership development program, which was the immediate need.

Following a discussion with the coalition's jobs committee, organizers offered a proposal to the college president to start with a single course, one that would be offered to coalition members for college credit and that would result in the design of a local hiring program.

The first half of the course would engage participants with information about the types of jobs anticipated by the project, as well as the barriers that lie between local residents and qualifications for those jobs. The course would also look at how other community organizations developed local hiring programs (with information drawn from the site visits), and participants would hear presentations by representatives including college personnel from existing job development and training programs. In the second half of the course participants would use what they had learned to plan a Figueroa Corridor local hiring program, and the course would culminate in a presentation to the college president, L.A. Arena principals, political representatives, and funders to solicit their collective support.

The proposed Trade Tech course satisfies the needs of both the coalition and the college. With a college's institutional support, the coalition has leverage in its struggle to establish a fair hiring program. The coalition gets to use community college resources to address complex popular education goals: building a common foundation of knowledge among members and engaging in a democratic and informed planning process. The college will be provided with a specific curriculum and a qualified instructor.[3] The college president's goal, to have his school be viewed as a learning home for the surrounding community, is also being addressed in the process.

Building People and Building Organization

As the home of the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice, SAJE has built a sustainable organization from the ground up. SAJE has supported the development of home-grown leaders by building tools for equal discussion and participation between people of diverse backgrounds and by elevating the level of discourse and planning at the organization's base so that more and more people can participate in democratic decision making. Together, these efforts are what we call popular education.

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[1] "Community, Developers Agree on Staples Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 2001.

[2] Spanish-speaking residents were provided with simultaneous translation at each meeting.

[3] The course instructor (who has a master's degree and is thus eligible to be hired by the college) will be the lead organizer for the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice. She will be assisted by the graduate student researcher who conducted the initial investigations on "best practices" and organized the site visits described. The course will be offered in the fall of 2002.

Courtesy Vivian Rothstein.

Fighting for a Living Wage in Santa Monica

By Vivian Rothstein

My name is Vera Miranda. I work at Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel. I have worked there for thirteen years. I work in the housekeeping department as a supervisor, but many times I also work as a housekeeper.

More than two years ago I accepted to be part of the union organizing committee, and started talking about how my life and my family's would change if we had the same benefits as union workers. I started fighting because I need good medical benefits, set days off; but most importantly I also need job security and respect.

Many times I feel scared. My oldest son works in the restaurant, my mother works in the housekeeping department, and my brother is the manager of the laundry department. When I started the campaign, the pastor of my church asked the congregation to pray for us, to help us in our fight. I also remember what Father Bob Miller said to me in our first meeting, how he had gone through so many difficult things during the civil rights movement, and he is my inspiration.[1]

I feel confident; I have learned to be stronger, as a mother, as a person, as a wife, and as a partner.

I am asking for what is fair, just like the rest of my coworkers in the City of Santa Monica. The fight is hard, but not impossible. With God's help we are going to win. ¡Si se puede!

The Background Story

Santa Monica, California, is a coastal city of 90,000 residents nestled on the western border of Los Angeles. In the early 1980s, a liberal city council majority was swept into power on the energy of a local rent control movement, which represented the interests of the city's majority-renter population. In order to bring revenue into city coffers to finance an active social services and affordable housing agenda, the city decided to promote the development of a local tourism industry that would build on the natural beauty and beach access of the city's coastal location.

Through the investment of more than $170 million in taxpayer dollars, the city refurbished the beachfront, preserved and rebuilt the famous Santa Monica pier, upgraded the adjacent Palisades Park and outdoor shopping promenade, and improved the area's infrastructure. A portion of the bed and sales tax revenues were used to promote the local tourism industry, the tourists started coming to the city—and haven't stopped.[2] This tale of economic success was further enhanced when Santa Monica voters froze the development of new beachfront hotels, giving the existing luxury hotels a captive market protected from new competition. In 2001 Santa Monica's tourism serving industry generated about $770 million in local business.

The ugly story behind the hospitality industry's success began to emerge in 1996 when the city's only unionized hotel began an aggressive fight to decertify the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) union at the then Miramar Sheraton Hotel through the use of professional union-busting consultants. In the process of supporting the hotel's workers in their fight to protect their union benefits, local activists, religious leaders, and city council members became aware of the conditions under which local hotel workers labored, their low wages, and their lack of basic rights to free

Courtesy Vivian Rothstein.

Hotel workers and community supporters commit civil disobedience to demand that Loews Hotel remove professional union busters, June 2000.

speech and free association. It was through this first engagement that the idea for a local living wage, covering workers in the coastal zone's large hotels, was born.

Courtesy Vivian Rothstein

Clergy distribute tiny slices of pie to dramatize how little of the city's economic pie is affected by the living wage law, August 2001.

The Telling of Personal Stories

The five-year campaign to win collective bargaining agreements for Santa Monica hotel workers and to pass a city living wage law has taken inspiration from the personal stories of workers like Vera Miranda.

These stories have emerged through a worker organizing strategy that emphasizes deep engagement with individual workers and the articulation of their hopes and dreams for their lives. When HERE Local 814 organizers meet with workers, they go beyond gathering basic information about the workers' job situations. They also learn about the workers' background; their family status; a difficult life challenge they have faced and how they handled it; an instance when they have taken leadership in their family, their community, their workplace, or church; their dreams for their children; their aspirations for their own lives and hopes for the future; and their deepest expectations of themselves.[3] The organizers reciprocate by sharing their own histories and challenges and by explaining what inspires them to organize workers to gain power in the workplace and the community.

This approach has also been used in the campaign's community and clergy organizing, with the goal of developing deep and trusting relationships between activists and organizers. These relationships form the foundation for jointly taking on organizing challenges that may prove frightening, discouraging, or simply insurmountable when confronted alone.

In sharing their stories of hardship and courage, workers are able to inspire and encourage other workers and community activists. Community leaders are motivated by the courage of low-wage, immigrant service workers who stand up against powerful companies. And, as Vera Miranda recounted, she and her coworkers in turn take inspiration from the stories of community allies, such as Reverend Miller, who was a leader in the 1960s civil rights movement.

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The Stories of Workers Are Trusted

As community polling has established, community residents most trust the stories from workers themselves regarding conditions in the local hotels. Because of this, every effort is made to put workers' stories forward in every aspect of the community organizing campaign. This means including worker spokespeople at press conferences, membership meetings, and public presentations, and making sure workers' words are a part of campaign literature—all with the goal of communicating the day-to-day experience of service workers at the hands of management.

The opposition—wealthy hotel corporations and their allies in the local chamber of commerce—wishes to portray the conflict in Santa Monica as being between union and management, thereby characterizing it as a struggle between two powerful institutions. But the labor-community coalition's organizing approach has always been to make it clear that this is a struggle between workers who are standing up for their rights and the economic priorities of companies that want to maximize their profits. The union may be the vehicle to develop leaders and strategy, but it is the workers themselves and the issues they care about that form the foundation of this campaign.

Breaking Out of Passivity

In 1996 community activists organized Santa Monicans Allied for Responsible Tourism (SMART) to support workers and push for a living wage. SMART staff and activists have always made community meetings and presentations participatory, using activities such as role-playing to create learning environments that are active and engaging. For instance, at a citywide forum focused on workers' right to organize, HERE staff re-created a management captive-audience meeting in which community supporters were put through the kind of intimidating and frightening meeting hotel management had conducted to discourage workers from working with the union.

The room was circled by "security personnel," no one was allowed to leave, and plants in the audience made anti-union statements while union supporters were silenced. An anti-union video produced by a union-busting consulting firm and used in the attempted union decertification campaign of the Miramar Sheraton was shown, and an organizer acted out the role of hotel general manager.

After the enactment, participants were asked how they felt about the treatment and what they could lose personally if their employer decided to pinpoint them as "troublemakers." They left the workshop understanding something of the terror employers can create when they hire professional consultants to conduct an aggressive campaign of harassment and misinformation about union organizing.

Another teaching opportunity was created at a SMART retreat. Retreat participants were assigned to represent different interest groups in the local community (renters, small business owners, hotel workers, senior citizens, homeowners, and so on) and to interact in the context of the election fight over the living wage proposal. Each group was asked to identify its position on the ordinance based on self-interest and then to actively recruit allies from other groups to build its coalition either in favor of or in opposition to the Living Wage Ordinance. Because participants had to articulate the interests of their own interest group and recruit others to their position, the exercise provided an active learning environment and gave them the opportunity to talk about the living wage campaign. At the end of the exercise, each coalition was asked which interest groups they had recruited to their side and what arguments had been used to recruit them. Lastly, the participants were asked which coalition would win the living wage electoral battle and why.

The exercise not only helped participants understand the political landscape that existed in Santa Monica, it also helped them form arguments to attract allies and to understand what an effective advocacy campaign to win the living wage would look like in order to attract a majority of the city's voters.

Other examples of participatory learning included role-playing in which SMART members were asked to explain the details of SMART's living wage proposal in various situations: in front of a general meeting, to a friend at church, to a fellow apartment dweller, or to a fellow homeowner over the back fence. As opposed to lecturing SMART members, this approach provided active engagement and even some humor while communicating important information to local activists.

Such participatory learning environments take time to develop and to carry out. They require an investment in planning as well as opportunities for role-playing and practice. But their overall impact is far greater than more traditional lecture or classroom settings. And they help set the tone for an active campaign in which individuals are often asked to take personal risks to help build the movement.

Courtesy Vivian Rothstein.

Avelino Alvarez, a union cook at Fairmont Miramar hotel, a resident of Santa Monica, and an activist in the living wage movement.

Getting Organized by the Opposition

While SMART's initial activities were aimed at helping community members understand the mistreatment local hotel workers were experiencing at the hands of hotel management, it was the hotels' dishonest campaign against the SMART Living Wage Ordinance that helped the community understand what it really meant to be mistreated by wealthy hotel corporations.

In 1999, just as the Santa Monica City Council was considering the results of an economic study of SMART's living wage proposal, the hotel opposition formed a group called the "Santa Monica Living Wage Coalition." While calling themselves the Living Wage Coalition, the proposition they promoted, dubbed by SMART as the fake living wage, would have made it impossible for the city council to ever pass a living wage ordinance covering hotel workers.

The sheer dishonesty of the campaign for what was subsequently titled Proposition KK, the amount of money spent to fool the public, and the mean-spiritedness of the entire effort by large, profitable hotel corporations and their business allies so offended local voters that the proposition was defeated 79 to 21 percent. More importantly, it further united workers and community members.

Courtesy Vivian Rothstein.

Rabbi Neil Comess Daniels sings in front of Loews Hotel during the April 2001 clergy processional to support hotel workers.

The Campaign Continues

After defeating the fake living wage proposal at the ballot in 2000, SMART got its original proposal back on track. After numerous public hearings and worker and community testimony, and despite active business opposition, the city council passed a living wage ordinance in July 2001. Within one month, however, the business opposition was able to qualify a repeal of the ordinance for the November 2002 ballot, using paid signature gatherers and spending more than $400,000 on the effort. The ordinance will be inoperative until that vote.

In the meantime, community members have continued in their efforts to support

Santa Monica hotel workers who have faced layoffs following the events of September 11, 2001. Community activists proposed a Displaced Worker Protection Ordinance guaranteeing laid-off workers the first right to be rehired as job openings come up. This unique ordinance went into effect on January 11, 2002. The Santa Monica City Council has also passed an Anti-Retaliation Ordinance, which protects workers who have stood up in support of the living wage from discharge, discipline, or discrimination from their employers.

The last chapter of the fight for economic justice in Santa Monica has not yet been imagined. The experience of a participatory learning environment, the sharing of personal stories, and the strength of the relationships that are built when individuals identify their deepest dreams will give the movement the ability to prevail against imposing opposition. And as it prevails, this movement will help inspire other efforts to win economic justice one city at a time.

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[1] Reverend Bob Miller is a retired Methodist minister.

[2] A bed tax is a rate typically levied on hotels and motels.

[3] This process is required of all Los Angeles HERE organizers who complete what is known as a "pink sheet" as they get to know workers they are hoping to organize into union activities.

Courtesy Just Transition Alliance.

Just Transition Alliance: Frontline Workers and Fenceline Communities United for Justice

By Jenice L. View

The residents of Rillito, Arizona, a small desert community, suffer an incidence of respiratory illness that seems unusually high. Yet, despite strong evidence of severe air pollution, residents are unable to get the management of the adjacent cement facility to respond to their inquiries. Workers inside the cement plant lack basic health and safety protections, and the plant management has refused to sign a new contract for four years. Workers fear that plant management will manipulate the complaints of community residents in contract negotiations, or that community demands for cleanup measures may cost workers their jobs. Community residents fear that workers will automatically side with plant management and ignore the environmental damage to the surrounding area. Is there a way to help workers and residents find common cause and jointly hold a profitable facility more accountable?

A failure to ask the right questions creates intractable local tensions. Five years after Just Transition Alliance members first convened, the public perception of a conflict between labor and environmental justice remains.[1] Workers inside toxic-related facilities (the frontline) and the residents of surrounding communities (the fenceline) are those most affected by toxic devastation and those least heard in policy discussions. The alliance exists to help unite rank-and-file workers and grassroots community residents as they create and promote a just transition from unsafe workplaces and environments to healthy communities with a sustainable economy.

As organizers, we believe that the most effective social change comes from those who face injustice on a daily basis. Our idea of grassroots organizing is not limited to letter-writing campaigns opposing

Residents of Rillito Vista
for a Better Living Environment

Courtesy Just Transition Alliance.

Over one hundred community members and workers attend press conference outside APC.

federal policies. Instead, we nurture coalitions—local, long-term community-labor alliances that work to hold toxic-use industries and government accountable for a lack of worker health and safety and environmental protection, lapses in regulatory enforcement, and outright abuses. We believe in an inclusive approach that does not waste time arguing about which affected group has suffered the worst injustice. Rather, we recognize that corporate (and, too often, governmental) interests regularly injure workers, communities, and the environment in pursuit of profit. We refuse to abandon one another for economic security or for environmental health and safety, as we want both. We believe that the negative economic and environmental effects of globalization require us to have a global consciousness in designing solutions. Our membership includes representatives from the United States, Mexico, and Canada, and we seek connections with organized labor, communities, and environmental justice activists around the world.

JTA partners help organize community residents and workers to develop progressive policy and to provide mutual support by attending joint rallies and testifying at public meetings. The tools for convening local people include educational workshops and joint strategy development. In addition, JTA members and local partners engage in joint fundraising for long-range partnerships.

All of the participating groups have signed a statement of cooperation to seek common approaches to our differences. This effort has been led by five of the major environmental justice networks and the Paperworkers, Allied-Industrial, Chemical, and Energy International Union (PACE).[2] Over time, "just transition" has gone from being an idea promoted by a small, voluntary coalition to a solid policy approach increasingly embraced by wider audiences.

This expansion is due in part to the use of popular education to help workers and community residents discover common cause. Below is a description of the popular education techniques we use, as well as a description of a specific site where education has been intimately linked to local organizing.

The Just Transition training program is designed to reflect the following values:

1. **Respect**: We believe in worker and community-centered training. Adults bring a vast array of knowledge, experience, and expertise to the table. We respect that contribution and make it the center of our learning process.

2. **Share the Power**: We believe that when workers and community residents function as health and safety activists and leaders, it creates changes in a plant's health and safety culture and in the surrounding community.
3. **Work Collectively**: We believe that many heads are better than one. People working together to solve problems are more productive, efficient, and creative than individuals working alone.
4. **Democratize**: We believe that people should be trained as facilitators, not experts, and that training materials and methodologies should be designed to accomplish that end.

Embedded in these values is the belief that education must include a critical analysis of who has power, who makes decisions, and what motivates decision makers. With this knowledge, community residents and workers can strengthen their power and organize more effectively for change.

During an educational workshop, these values are put into action using: (1) small group tasks in which participants discuss and respond to a set of questions using one-page fact sheets for reference; (2) report-backs in which small group representatives share solutions and responses with the larger group and with the trainers; and (3) summary discussions in which the trainer highlights the key points and brings up any problems or points that may have been overlooked during the report-back.

The Small Group Activity Method

The Small Group Activity Method (SGAM) was first popularized in the United States by the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers (OCAW) Union (now PACE) and the Labor/Public Health Institute.[3] Since 1980, more than 150 worker-trainers have used the method to teach fellow workers about issues applicable to collective bargaining, health and safety in particular. Just Transition Alliance has adapted the SGAM to address the particular issues OCAW/PACE workers and environmental justice networks face.

The small groups at each table consist of equal numbers of residents from low-income communities of color affected by environmental contamination and workers from local facilities that produce toxic substances, contribute to local hazards, or both.

Workbook materials attempt to present the issues and controversies facing participants—such as environmental racism and job fear—in a way that encourages them to evaluate the root causes (for example, corporate policies) rather than blaming each other.[4] For example, small group participants might discuss the fact that while downsizing in the oil refinery industry may maximize profits, it also increases the risk of accidents and hazardous substance releases, and compromises the health and safety of workers and community residents. Following this discussion, the small group might propose methods for increasing worker and community participation in company decisions to ensure adequate staffing, improve facility design to reduce hazards, and improve contamination cleanup.

Like many popular educators, we use a nonlecture, learner-centered format that draws on the experiences and knowledge of workers at toxic-related facilities and residents of fenceline communities. Apart from offering an introduction to the workshop, instructing participants on how to navigate the workbook, and summarizing the discussion, the trainer merely provides a safe space for participants to share and learn. In sharing research and data with participants, we try to create materials that rely less on the written word and more on visual representations.

Over time, we have been experimenting with additional teaching methods such as movement, visual art, and role-plays to accommodate a variety of learning styles and cultural backgrounds.

Most of the materials we use illustrate complex problems such as environmental racism and job fear among workers, and provide examples of how workers and community residents can work together to solve them. For example, we suggest investigating toxic chemical releases and analyzing the safety systems of the company in question. In our view, a "just transition" to a sustainable economy means that in the event of unavoidable job losses or property condemnation the polluter compensates workers and residents for retraining, relocation, transitional income, and so on. Just Transition Alliance supports macrolevel policies that prevent polluters from merely shifting operations from one community or nation to another. The overarching goal of a "just transition" is the reduction or elimination of toxic exposures and environmental contamination without forcing workers and community residents to pay for the improvement with their jobs or their health.

The Rillito, Arizona, Case

We are currently nurturing an alliance between PACE Local 8-296, which represents 107 workers at Arizona Portland Cement (APC); the local community of Rillito, Arizona; and Tucsonians for a Clean Environment.[5]

Rillito is a small, unincorporated desert community thirty miles outside of Tucson that sits at the fenceline of APC. The racial composition of both residents and workers is almost equally

Courtesy Just Transition Alliance

PACE 8-675 and other union workers join residents of Rillito and APC workers at a rally outside the APC Corporate offices, Glendora, Calif.

one-third white, Chicano, and African American. The PACE workers at the cement facility were forced to work without a contract from late 1997 until early 2002. Residents—largely working-class retirees and middle-aged adults, with few young people—had a history of community involvement but were not formally organized.

Rillito also suffers from the state's worst air pollution. The EPA recently levied an $82,442 fine against APC for failing to publicly inform residents about nickel and cobalt in air releases, which had been documented five years previously. The fine confirmed union members and community residents' suspicions that the company has not been operating in good faith. Initially JTA organizers held conversations with all parties involved to gauge interest in collaboration. All the parties—including the union and community groups—agreed, but none of the groups knew how the others functioned or what motivated their members.

An introductory Just Transition workshop was held a few months later. While many of the PACE members live in Tuscon and commute to their industrial jobs in Rillito, most Rillito residents are retirees or service workers. Although their concerns appeared to vary greatly, workshop participants discovered common cause. Since September of 2000, activities have included a community cleanup (supported by workers as well as residents), joint picketing outside the plant, and rallies at corporate offices in Phoenix and Los Angeles. Workers and community residents created an agenda for joint work that includes a health survey and a proposal to use the revenue from EPA fines to support environmental cleanup. PACE international staff waged a corporate campaign and provided a union organizer, community legal assistance, and resources with which to hire a community organizer. JTA is supporting on-the-ground community organizing as well.

In January 2002, the workers at APC won a new union contract. They attribute their success in large part to the support of community residents and the Just Transition process. Workers and residents are pleased with the heightened media and governmental attention to their community's environmental concerns. Workers have vowed to continue to ally with residents regarding unhealthy production processes at APC as well as other

Courtesy Just Transition Alliance.

APC workers and community members protest outside the California Portland Cement Company's corporate offices.

sources of pollution affecting Rillito. This community-labor alliance is a direct result of Just Transition's efforts to encourage productive dialogue. While the organizing work has sustained the alliance, all parties agree that the popular education process fostered by Just Transition Alliance was the guiding light.

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[1] Just Transition Alliance Partners include Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN); Canadian Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers (CEP); Farmworker Environmental Justice Network (FEJN); Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN); Paperworkers, Allied-Industrial, Chemical, and Energy Workers International Union (PACE); Northeast Environmental Justice Network (NEJN); and Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ). This work is supported by the following foundations: Alki, Ford, New World, Noyes, Solidago, Tides, and Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock.

[2] Ibid.

[3] In "Health and Safety Organizing: OCAW's Worker-to-Worker Health and Safety Training Program," labor scholar Craig Slatin writes: "A small non-profit organization called the Labor Institute . . . addressed a range of labor issues. . . . An intern named Les Leopold in the OCAW's [Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers] national office . . . headed the institute's training activities. . . . Leopold noticed a 'pedagogical problem' in that they were delivering the message that workers did not need conservative economists to run their lives, but instead they needed radical economists to run their lives. Leopold came to believe that to help democratize the unions, an effort to enhance workers' abilities to take more control was necessary. It would mean more than helping them understand the ideas of progressive professionals. . . . Leopold wanted [training activities] to be 'student-centered'; he wanted the focus on dialogue between participants. In 1980 Leopold attended a participatory training conference at the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee. David Clemens, a conference participant, had been working for the British Trade Union Council (TUC) . . . Clemens presented small group training activities that [were] rooted in Freirian methods. Leopold visited the TUC . . . and saw an 'organized process [in which] most of the time the workers functioned in small groups rather than listening to the trainer.'" *New Solutions: A Journal of Occupational Health Policy* 11, no. 4, (December 2001).

[4] For the most part, introductory Just Transition materials reflect the petrochemical industry and the urbanized communities of our membership and do not include specific facilities or local demographics. Despite the lack of references to the local cement industry or to small, desert communities, participants at the Rillito workshop were able to "insert themselves" into the scenarios very easily. This use of materials as frames of reference rather than as mandates as well as the small group structure of the workshop are hallmarks of many popular education processes and we were pleased to see the theory in action.

[5] TCE is an affiliate of SNEEJ, a member of the Just Transition Alliance. SNEEJ and TCE provided support for community organizing.

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Courtesy Susan Williams.

The Power of Voices: The Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network

By Susan Williams

In 1981, Maxine Waller spoke to a conference of labor and community activists:

> I was Betty Crocker of the mountains. Take care of my house, take care of my children, support my husband and go to church and live in the community. In 1966 we had a major industry called National Carbide pull out and take 450 jobs. But we still had an industry, a mining company called New Jersey Zinc. It's a subsidiary of Gulf and Western, the same people that own Hollywood, California. Lucille Ball, who recently died, was a big stockholder in that company. Since 1981 I haven't been able to watch her on TV. Because I realized that for some people to become rich, other people have to be destroyed.
>
> My husband was a hard rock miner: lead, zinc, iron, and magnesium. He was a union man, worked sixteen years for this company. He went every day. He loved his job. The mining company had been in our community for two hundred years. So it was not just a job. It was a heritage, part of our lives.
>
> One day my husband went to work, the same normal person that he always had been, bouncing—he always bounced when he walked. And that evening when he came home, a stranger walked into my house. He walked through the door and he didn't bounce and I asked him what was wrong. And he said, "Well, they're shutting the company down."
>
> And I asked him, I said, "Wait a minute, when are they going to do this?"
>
> "They did it today."
>
> I said, "Wait a minute, they're planning on doing this, right?"

"No, they told us at 7:01 this morning that they were shutting the company down. At three minutes after seven they backed the truck to the door and said 'load it.'"

So a stranger moved into my house.

That was 1981. This is 1989 and I'm still living with a stranger. I'm living with a shell of a person. The first thing people in the community have to do is take possession of their history and realize what happened, and how did they get in the boat they're in now. They said for us to tighten our belts. Where's this belt located? Around his throat and around my heart.[1]

An Introduction

This is a story about the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network (TIRN), a community-labor coalition born from the recession of the late 1980s and still thriving today. Hopefully it shares the sense of the excitement we felt as we broke new ground in Tennessee on issues of tremendous importance to our communities and as we linked our struggle to that of communities elsewhere.

In the late 1980s, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) began to look for strategies to deal with a wave of plant closings.[2] ACTWU joined with the Highlander Center, a popular education center based in Tennessee that was working on regional economic issues, and the Commission on Religion in Appalachia (CORA), a network of religious and community organizations supporting communities and churches in Appalachia. Together the groups worked to support research and publicity efforts and, most importantly, to sponsor a 1989 conference that explored organizing strategies to counter the devastation hitting our communities. It was out of the joint effort of this conference that the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network began, with the intention to link community, labor, and religious groups together to fight back for good jobs in Tennessee. ACTWU, the Highlander Center, and CORA all provided staff time, resources, and energy to attack systemic economic issues around jobs and industry. But it was the people directly affected, the factory workers, contingent workers, and unemployed workers, who gave inspiration and heart to this effort. TIRN has always strived to adopt a popular education approach in our work by ensuring that these workers' voices and their experiences would be at the forefront of the organization, driving our analysis and decision-making process.

TIRN continues today in Tennessee, working on living wage campaigns and trade issues across the state. It has grown and changed, but it continues to address systemic economic issues affecting communities across the world.

A Little Background on Our Region

From the 1950s to the 1980s Tennessee, like much of the southern United States, attracted industrial facilities from other parts of the country and from other industrialized nations. Industrial recruiters trumpeted Tennessee's lower wages, its lack of unionization, the low cost of its natural resources, and its government's willingness to provide incentives: buildings, infrastructure, and training. Many Tennesseans who went to work in these factories received livable wages and benefits and found the work easier and steadier than farm or service jobs. Industrial jobs were especially important for people with limited education and people living in rural communities, both of whom had fewer economic opportunities.

Industrial growth and recruitment in Tennessee continued well into the late 1980s, until a recession and corporate buyouts began forcing many factories to close their doors. Some closings were due to financial bankruptcies, but frequently they were the result of plans to consolidate with other facilities or to move to new lower-wage areas, particularly the booming *maquiladora* region of Mexico. Even profitable factories were closing in an effort to win higher profits by moving jobs elsewhere.

The Founding Conference of 1989

The conference that spawned TIRN brought together labor groups, community groups, religious leaders, academics, and other allies from around the country. Various speakers shared experiences that shed light on the trend of good factory jobs leaving the state and being replaced by lower-wage service jobs, or in many rural communities, by no jobs at all. Policy analysts, such as Stuart Rosenfield from the Southern Growth Policy Board in Raleigh, North Carolina, came to give a regional overview of industrial recruitment and retention. Leah Wise of Southerners for Economic Justice shared an organizing story from the closing of the Schlage Lock plant in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, in 1988. Members from a growing coalition called the Federation of Industrial Retention and Renewal, born in the rust belt of the Midwest and Northeast, energized Tennesseans with ideas for strategies. Norman Harper from United Auto Workers Local 2100 of Buffalo, New York, shared stories of a coalition organized around plant closings in Buffalo that raised questions about free trade and the role of the *maquiladoras* in exploiting workers to raise profits. The conference offered strategic ideas, but just as critical was the eloquent testimony from people, such as Maxine Waller, who had been directly affected by the problems and whose stories deeply moved listeners.

Although I was a new Highlander staff member at the time and had limited experience with plant closings, my previous organizing experience helped me recognize a familiar energy. I saw a spirited group ready to take on important issues. What was especially exciting was the mixture of labor, nonunion workers, and community groups that wanted to move together toward an unknown future organization.

Responding to Changes in Industry

One of the groups that inspired subsequent TIRN activities was Citizens Against Temporary

Services (CATS), a community organization that emerged in response to workers' needs. CATS banded together when General Electric laid workers off and made plans to move its warehouse facility to another company in the next county, contracting the service out to a company that would pay less. When laid-off GE workers went to look for other jobs in their small industrial town they were told to apply at temporary agencies, as industrial jobs were becoming more short-term. Many of these "temporary" jobs lasted for years, but categorizing jobs as such allowed companies to minimize their responsibilities to workers. Shirley Reinhardt testified at the conference:

> Our group comes from an industrial area in East Tennessee known as Morristown. We are a proud people that only want the right to work and earn a decent wage in order to support our families. I was an employee with General Electric in Morristown for ten years. I was laid off due to lack of work in distribution, only to find out two weeks later that our warehouse was being relocated twenty-five miles away with a workforce consisting of contracted labor. Although we were told it was a work transfer we were not allowed to transfer as GE employees. Our own investigation learned that the new warehouse, under the name USCO, would use JTPA [Job Training Partnership Act] funds to train people to take what we feel are our jobs. In the eyes of GE, we do not exist.
>
> A group of concerned citizens in our area formed Citizens Against Temporary Services [CATS]. . . . We are pleading for everyone's help to stop this tragedy we call temporary workforce. We feel the time has come for the working people of Tennessee to get what we have been working for so hard, a better life for ourselves and our children. With a combined effort, we can make a difference.[3]

In learning from the work that CATS did, TIRN members also adopted a participatory process involving workers affected by changes to respond to plant closings. We all knew about the many faces of contingent work, but the idea of permanent industrial jobs becoming "temporary" was a new, alarming idea to people. CATS members and TIRN supporters began to look jointly for organizing strategies and information and would come together to plan next steps. The CATS group worked with Harold Woods, Knoxville/Oak Ridge Central Labor Council president, to stop the new facility from receiving state funds to train new workers. CATS also worked tirelessly with a coalition of organizations to pass legislation that would require the same pay for the same work whether the jobs were temporary or permanent. Major support organizations included Save Our Cumberland

Mountains, a community organization in East Tennessee, and many unions that saw the danger of this trend for their members.

What CATS and TIRN didn't realize, however, was that this structural change was a global phenomenon. The forces arrayed against the legislation were considerable. In the end, the only legislation passed was a requirement for temporary agencies to register in the state.

To document these experiences, TIRN members formed the Citizen Rapid Response Committee and put together a manual called "Taking Charge: A Hands-On Guide to Dealing with the Threat of Plant Closings and Supporting Laid-Off Workers."[4] Cheryl Wolfe, who went through a plant closing at Delta Apparel with 630 workers right after the TIRN conference, subsequently became chair of TIRN. She wrote in the introduction to the manual:

> I want this manual for a legacy . . . to show instead of the fear and confusion, in lieu of the anger and bitterness, and without the shame and embarrassment what they were forced to feel.
>
> May it be used as a sword to cut through bureaucratic red tape, may it be wielded against inconsiderate and uncooperative employers. May it serve notice on JTPA staff who want to retrain you as they see fit. But most of all, may it ably defend one's honor against rude and debasing employment officers.
>
> And last, but not least, the manual shows the average man and woman a friend who cares—us, TIRN.[5]

TIRN's Citizen Rapid Response Committee did extraordinary work based on the experiences of its factory working members. The committee held a series of participatory workshops to train members and staff as rapid response teams to respond to workers in plants that were being shut down. These workshops helped participants expand their understanding of these situations and what might be done, and the group continued to work with people on plant closings for many years. However, actually stopping plant closings was an elusive goal. While TIRN did help a number of factory workers to organize to gain benefits that would have otherwise been lost and, in one case, to challenge a major federal tax break given to companies moving to Puerto Rico, TIRN ultimately found it difficult to organize workers early enough to prevent closings. It proved to be difficult to hold people together when plants closed, as people worked to rearrange their lives. And surprisingly, except for plants unionized by ACTWU and the United Rubber Workers most union plants were generally reluctant to involve TIRN folks in the closings of their factories. Nevertheless the person-to-person sharing of information and support did make a difference as workers moved through the traumas associated with closings and went on for training and, hopefully, for new jobs.

The Global Economy in Our Own Backyards

In 1990 Shirley Reinhardt, a TIRN member from the CATS group in Morristown, suggested that because so many industrial jobs were going to Mexico TIRN should take a trip there. So in 1991 two Mexican workers from a group called Comite Fronterizo de Obreras (Border Committee of Women Workers) came to Tennessee for presentations and discussion. Then a group of Tennessee factory workers and TIRN staff, along with a law professor studying globalization, made their way to the *maquiladora* area along the U.S.-Mexico border, to which huge corporations were moving their facilities to take advantage of the low labor costs, lax environment regulations, and proximity to the U.S. markets.

Courtesy Ernesto Mora

The Comite Fronteriza de Obreras (Border Committee of Working Women) receive a quilt from the TIRN during their 1991 trip to Reynosa and Matamoros.

These exchanges proved to be extraordinary education experiences. Here are quotes from women working in Mexico and in Tennessee:

> I made $30 a week for a forty-eight-hour week—that's about nine-and-a-half hours a day. The companies don't provide safety equipment workers need to protect themselves. We are glad we have access to jobs in the *maquiladora* areas because otherwise we might not have any source of income. What we don't like is that most of these companies are dumping wastes in public water.
>
> There is the general impression among U.S. people that Mexican workers are stealing jobs from American workers and having terrific lives from the wages they are making. Mexican

> workers know they are as good of workers as any in the world and efficient. They also know they steal jobs from nobody. They only demand better wages and better living conditions such as American workers have; it is their right.
>
> Teresa Hernandez, Matamoros, Mexico, and Olga Jimenez, Reynosa, Mexico[6]

> About twelve years ago at the plant where I worked, we had approximately three thousand workers. The place was booming; business was so good. We had contracts with General Motors, Ford, and big automotive manufactures. But in the early '80s things started to slow down some. A lot of the operations were transferred to a nonunion plant in Alabama. But they didn't stay in Alabama very long. They left there and went to a place called Agua Prieta in Mexico.
>
> We're not against increased trade with Mexico. We are certainly not against Mexican workers having jobs. But we are against blackmail. We are against any kind of system that pits workers against workers on the basis of which one can be forced to take the lowest wage. We are against any system that can encourage multinational corporations to go shopping for the lowest wage or the most lax law enforcement or the biggest tax break. Going to Mexico made me realize what a huge gap there was in our wages, law enforcement, and working conditions. Our government's reaction to the global economy is that corporations need more freedom. A visit to the *maquiladoras* will show you what freedom without responsibility can mean. I have fears that the kind of North American Free Trade Agreement favored by the present [George H. W. Bush] administration will turn most of Mexico into one big *maquiladora* zone. I have fear the joblessness will continue to increase in our own country, and the jobs that remain will lack the wages and benefits and dignity of industrial production.
>
> Luvernel Clark, Knoxville, Tennessee[7]

Upon returning to Tennessee, TIRN members found that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was being negotiated by the United States, Canada, and Mexico. A group of TIRN members traveled to trade hearings to testify about their own lives and what they had learned in Mexico, which served as concrete examples of what free trade means to workers and communities. Members who had participated in the Mexico exchange trip put together a slide show and later a video to educate TIRN members and other organizations about the exploitation of Mexican and U.S. workers; about the corporations that controlled the economic decision making within industry and within our government; and about NAFTA and its likely effects. The video *From the Mountains to the*

Maquiladoras has proven to be useful for educators and community groups.[8] It presents the voices of people directly affected by these issues speaking about the faces of globalization.

As the potential effects of NAFTA were of concern to many, this moment provided an extraordinary opportunity to build coalitions across sectors. Unions, environmental groups, Central American solidarity groups, church organizations, and concerned individuals came together with help from a national network, the Citizens Trade Campaign. This network formed out of various U.S. efforts to fight NAFTA, with farm, consumer, and labor groups leading the way. As unions like ACTWU and the United Auto Workers (UAW) began to educate their members about the likely effects of NAFTA and globalization, TIRN's efforts also accelerated. TIRN members poured time and energy into fighting NAFTA and made conscious efforts to forge alliances with groups in Mexico and Canada in order to develop an internationalist perspective on trade. TIRN and allied groups organized motorcade rallies and education forums with Mexican and Canadian counterparts and also met with Tennessee's congressional representatives. The presence of factory workers as TIRN leaders who could speak for themselves about the effects of free trade on their workplaces, their families, and people in Mexico grounded the campaign and gave TIRN a human face, which helped it make great strides in outreach, education, and political work within the United States.

TIRN gave people from various sectors the opportunity to hear from one another, which helped them appreciate different points of view and build relationships that could endure. For example, having both union and nonunion workers in committee meetings allowed nonunion workers in Tennessee the rare chance to hear stories about how having a union really helped workers and why workers felt loyalty to the union. Many times nonunion workers were surprised to hear that some abuse in a factory could be stopped with a union contract.

Courtesy Susan Williams.

A participant in the TIRN trip to El Paso/Juarez, *left*, and a representative protesting the poisoning of his neighborhood by a *maquila* plant.

I believe the strength of TIRN was that we paid attention to the processes by which people came together and that our strategies were developed on the basis of the experiences of people directly affected by the changing economy. We linked our education to organizing. We provided a place where diverse constituencies working on issues like workplace problems, environmental devastation, and community economic development could join forces to build power greater than that of their own group or union. And there were converging factors that assisted us—the fact that the CATS group formed when it did and the fact that our first trip to Mexico coincided with the beginnings of the campaign against NAFTA.

A 1993, Morristown, Tenn., motorcade and rally against NAFTA.

TIRN continues as a strong coalition, conducting living wage and antitrade agreement campaigns.[9] The worker exchange program continues strengthening the voices for economic justice in Tennessee: in 2000 participants traveled further into Mexico and met with unions and workers on a trip sponsored by the Mexico Solidarity Network. With the large growth in new immigration to Tennessee, particularly people from Mexico, we are meeting a new challenge—to build bridges and make links with the new workers in our communities.

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[1] *Responding to Plant Closings in Tennessee* (Knoxville: Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network, 1989), 28.

[2] ACTWU is now part of UNITE!, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees.

[3] *Responding to Plant Closings in Tennessee*, 26.

[4] Cheryl Wolfe, "Taking Charge: A Hands-On Guide to Dealing with the Threat of Plant Closings and Supporting Laid-off Workers" (Knoxville, Tenn.: Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network, 1991).

[5] Wolfe, "Taking Charge," introduction.

[6] Presentations by Mexican workers during TIRN meetings with women workers from Tennessee, March 1991.

[7] *From the Mountains to the Maquiladoras*, dir. Anne Lewis, Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network, 1991, videocasette. Clark presented her testimony at a hearing held by the Trade Staff Policy Committee, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Atlanta, Ga., August 29, 1991.

[8] *From the Mountains to the Maquiladoras*, Lewis.

[9] TIRN also has provided support for other organizations to grow, including the United Campus Workers, Jobs with Justice, and the Sincere 7.

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The Battle in Seattle

Adapted from an article by Liz Brown

"If you give people the information they need and empower them, you can change the world."
—Verlene Wilder, King County Labor Council, Seattle

On November 30, 1999, more than fifty thousand people filled the streets of Seattle to protest the effects of capitalist globalization and the exclusion of their issues from the agenda of the World Trade Organization (WTO) summit. Police deployed tear gas and rubber bullets against tenacious demonstrators who successfully blocked WTO delegates from reaching the site of the talks. Within days, the trade summit collapsed in discord.

While the protests received widespread media attention, little is known about the education campaign that laid the foundation for the participation of thousands of union members. Spearheaded by the King County Labor Council and the AFL-CIO, it was a massive effort to educate American workers about the history, power, and impact of the World Trade Organization, a group many were unfamiliar with at the time.

Verlene Wilder, labor council staff member, was not clear what the WTO was in February of 1998 when she attended a meeting of labor and environmental leaders and activists from such groups as People for Fair Trade and United for a Fair Economy. "The WTO wasn't on the labor council's radar screen at the time." After the meeting, Wilder took on the task of coordinating the education program for thousands of union workers in King County. Would workers sacrifice a day's pay to hit the streets? Not unless they cared. "You can't mobilize without educating," Wilder said. "The two go hand in hand. What we had to do was bring the issues home to the workers in Seattle."

There were lots of people to educate. Through its 157 affiliate unions, the labor council represents more than 150,000 workers in King County. The council had formed an education committee, a group of rank-and-file members and union leaders whose main mission initially was to spread the message of the AFL-CIO's "Common Sense Economics" program. As education coordinator, Wilder brought WTO materials to the committee, which in turn took on the task of explaining the WTO so union workers would understand the organization's impact on their jobs and their workplace rights.

Bringing Trade Issues Home to Workers

Although the labor council played a coordination role, key to the worker education campaign was that it was driven by local union affiliates. Wilder said, "We didn't come in and tell them what they had to do; in fact they decided on the issues that were important to their members and they created their own fact sheets and training programs."

Worksite Education: Making It Popular

The education committee's goal was to reach as many union members as possible, not just to mobilize them but to educate them about why world trade policies affected them. They set to work on short, simple messages. Since access to worksites was limited, they created a five-minute training that activists could easily deliver on the job and a thirty-minute training for presentations to larger groups of workers, such as at union meetings. By October of 1998, twenty-five union activists trained by the committee were delivering an average of five presentations a week to unions and to community, civic, and political groups.

To zero in on local interests, the education committee researched and wrote one-page fliers explaining the impact of the WTO on workers in specific industries and used them in their training programs. Workers in manufacturing jobs, such as steelworkers, already had stark examples of the way international trade practices and rules had eroded their once solid industries. Union members in the service sector created leaflets to explain how GATT—the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—would affect them. The fliers explained that GATT, which was being debated by the WTO at the time, would make it easier for corporations to move information services to cheap offshore facilities. It brought the issues home for workers who catalogued medical records and for others who thought the WTO would have no impact on their jobs. And committee members adapted the language they used to reach their members. A building trades flier, for example, began, "Don't let the WTO screw you."

Involving the Kids

For the labor council's annual Labor Day celebration, the education committee developed a large booth with a scavenger hunt. To win prizes, children (and their parents) had to search for answers to questions about the WTO among the educational materials on display. In a mock voting booth designed by the Carpenter's Union, children cast "ballots" (pinto beans placed in tubes), giving their opinions on trade-related issues. "The only way to answer the questions was to read the information," Wilder said. "It was an effective way to engage entire families in learning about how the WTO would affect them."

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Union members demonstrate against the WTO.

Education for Action

This education campaign was clearly driven by the need to act. Members took the information they received from their unions and explained to their families, their friends, and their neighbors why they should care about a seemingly abstract, esoteric organization like the WTO and why they should take to the streets on November 30.

The committee designed three-by-five cards, hard-hat stickers, posters, buttons, and bumper stickers that urged people to action, to be there on "N30," November 30. Meanwhile, the labor council's mobilization committee worked with unions to mobilize their members. Each union was asked to appoint one person as mobilization coordinator for the effort. Along the way, both the education and the mobilization committees attracted new members, and new leaders emerged. And union workers connected with people from environmental, religious, consumer rights, and other groups.

N30 and Beyond

On November 30, an estimated forty thousand people filled Seattle's Memorial Stadium for a labor-sponsored rally. Then they marched, joining thousands of other protestors already thronging the Seattle streets in internationally televised demonstrations that would provide the inspiration for similar labor-community alliances worldwide. By any measure, the education and mobilization campaigns were a success.

The work of Seattle labor activists laid the groundwork for education activities on the global economy that the AFL-CIO added to its "Common Sense Economics" program. Key to its successful use in other areas will be the elements that made the Seattle education campaign a success: a grassroots driven program that addressed workers' concerns and placed them in a larger context, reached large numbers of workers, and was motivated by the need to take action.

Since the historic Seattle protests, the labor council's education committee has worked to maintain the momentum. They developed a new training on the Free Trade Area of the Americas. The committee again is training activists from affiliate unions to educate their own members. "The challenge now," Wilder said, "is to keep people engaged for the long haul."

Popular Theater and Culture

Chapter

5

Courtesy Labor Heritage Foundation Archives.

On Theater and the Labor Movement: An Interview with Elise Bryant

By Linda Delp and Miranda Outman-Kramer

I would love it if every local union had a theater company. That would be great. We could reclaim the union hall as being a place where the community would gather, where people would bring their families.

I'm not going to be so pretentious as to think that the labor movement is going to jump up tomorrow and do that—it would be great if they did but that's not going to happen. But you might think about how to use this in your work.

How did you get involved in this line of work?

I was asked to start a labor theater project at the University of Michigan Labor Studies Center. We called it "Workers' Lives, Workers' Stories," and it lasted for seventeen years. We did current and historical plays based on workers' lives. We had a locally based, community, feminist, lefty political theater company.

And before that, I grew up with the union. My father worked on the line at the Ford Motor Company and he was a member of UAW Local 600. So I was very much aware of strikes—you don't cross picket lines and you participate.

My mother was a cleaning lady. She cleaned the homes of the wealthy. One of the key recognitions that I came to, as part of being a feminist, was the economic disparity of women's work.

One of the first plays we did was a piece based on a corset company strike in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in 1912. The key issue was sexual harassment. They didn't have the word; the term wasn't sexual harassment but "being taken advantage of." That was clearly one of the primary issues for the women in that workplace. And the woman who was sent from the Industrial Workers of the World to do the organizing—Josephine Casey—was told by the leaders of the union to not focus on that. That it wouldn't be popular enough. The irony is that it was a corset company who threatened to move the whole plant to Iowa. There was a quote that was in the Kalamazoo newspaper; the owner of the plant said, "If you don't appreciate a good job, I know where people do and I can move this whole thing to Iowa," as opposed to moving it to Mexico.

The actors in the play were workers—a GM forklift driver, a secretary from the plant, a University of Michigan building painter, an unemployed mom. And the UAW decided to videotape it because they were doing a campaign on sexual harassment and had taken a strong stand. So they used it as an intro to a video called "You Wouldn't Let This Happen to Your Sister" and toured around the country showing it to all the local union executive boards.

I've been [at the George Meany Center] for four years now, and the class I enjoy teaching the most is the History of Labor Theater. We read plays and I ask them to look at the social, economic, and political context the play came out of by doing a timeline. One of the plays we read is fairly recent, "I am a Man," based on the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike [which Martin Luther King came to support and during which he was killed.] And people always ask, "Why don't we know about this? Why haven't we seen this film? Why isn't it in every union hall?" So I throw the question back to them and it generates discussion—about how we're part of a culture that's afraid of a real democracy and what that means, part of a culture that doesn't know its history and doesn't understand that everything happens in a historical context.

[As a popular educator], you don't have to be up here and know it all. You don't have to be the person who has all the answers. You facilitate the knowledge that's in the room. And in doing that, you're going to get out of the role of being the center of attention and put that back in the seats of the people around you. When you do that, you will find that it's not as draining and that it is in fact more renewing as an instructor to be in a role of facilitator as opposed to the role of the dispenser of knowledge.

What is the role of theater in education?

The thing about theater is that it's live. People can listen to someone lecture about history and say, "oh that was really great. I learned a lot." But what can you really retain from it? What can you share with someone else? If you see it, if you hear it, if you breathe it, you remember it in a different way.

And you can address emotional issues, like racism, sexism, things it's harder to deal with just by talking or by reason. One white southern woman from West Virginia told me how they were called hillbillies, how she told her son, "we may be poor, but we ain't stupid and we've always worked in the mines for what we've got." I put that in a play we did in "Workers' Lives, Workers Stories." And just last year, in one of my classes here at the National Labor College, I had a guy, Richard Darcy, a locomotive engineer. He had signed up for the class only because he needed one more humanities class to fulfill the requirements and he said he hated the theater. Well, he wrote an amazing play based on his own family and he had this beautiful line, "You can't undo with the head what was done by the heart."

I remember Henry. His wife, Kim, was not a union person, her family was not a union family and she always resented all the time he spent at the union hall. But he invited her to come to rehearsal once. And she loved to sing—she was a karaoke queen—so we recruited her for the play. And they ended up playing a husband-wife team. The play was about the union and family relationships, about people drifting apart and just doing their own lives, so they had a chance to be themselves, to act out their relationship. And I'll never forget, after the show, she said, "I never understood before what he was doing, why he was doing it, all I thought is that he wasn't spending time with us."

What was great is that other people started to bring their families to rehearsal. The kids were the props people, they did the lights and the sound, they were the cars going down the assembly line, they were helping out so they became a part of the production.

Theater is a validation of one's life as a person who works for a living. That's the part that they begin to talk about and relate to, that who I am, what we do, is art. Regardless of what trade or business you're in, it's a role that has value. There's value in passing it on.

Courtesy AFSCME Archives.

Forum Theater: More than a Role Play

By Linda Delp

It's a busy day at the hospital loading dock. Karen, Gary, and four other workers are loading boxes onto a truck for transport. "What's in these boxes anyway?" Gary asks Karen. "They're way too heavy for anyone to lift. I just heard that Jim hurt his back last week and he wasn't the first one. We need those power tailgates to help lift them." "Don't even waste your time thinking about them," Karen responds. "Nothing around here ever changes—they always say there's not enough money." A few minutes later, Gary stoops to lift another box and feels a sharp pain in his back.

Gary is out for several days. Disturbed after calling him, Karen contacts Sally, their steward. She tells Sally that several people have been injured and that what they need is a power tailgate. "There's nothing in the contract," Sally replies, "but I'll see what I can do." She sets up a meeting with Bill, whose management perspective is clear, "We did training on how to lift. Gary just can't handle the job; he's always getting injured." Sally does her best, mentioning that others have been injured too and that a power tailgate would help everyone. Finally, Bill agrees to look into back belts. When Sally tells Karen the outcome, she responds, "I knew it—they never want to spend any money. A back belt would not have helped Gary."

AFSCME activists at a health and safety conference developed this scene based on Sally's story. They acted it out for fellow union members, asking for new ideas for Sally. The audience was told they could not just tell Sally what to do, but had to actually step into her shoes to demonstrate their idea.

When the scene was enacted once again, participants enthusiastically raised their hands, shouting "Stop" and stepping in to intervene. Several volunteers stepped into the scene in the boss's office, trying out more convincing arguments to make Bill change his mind. Another volunteer called OSHA, only to learn that there was no regulation on lifting. Yet another returned to the workers after meeting with Bill, asking them to help document the number of injuries so she could take that back to him. Finally, someone stepped into the scene to convince the workers to meet with Bill as a group and to present their documentation themselves.

Just as important as the story is the discussion that follows. With the help of the "audience," the facilitator makes a list of the ideas that have been demonstrated, then guides a discussion to analyze the different strategies, the obstacles, and how these strategies fit into a larger union program to build power.

What makes forum theater popular education?[1] First, it starts from people's experiences. In a labor education workshop, participants begin by sharing their stories—stories of problems they felt powerless to deal with. From those stories, the group selects one or more that resonate, and volunteers reenact the situation as it happened, with the person affected playing himself or herself. Second, forum theater sets the stage for a critical analysis of power dynamics during the discussion afterwards. For example, a manager's attempt to "divide and conquer," portrayed by calling workers whiners or complainers, can be analyzed. Or the power of collective versus individual action can be discussed.

Courtesy AFSCME Archives.

AFSCME members at a health and safety conference participate in forum theater.

And finally, forum theater provides an opportunity to practice and analyze different strategies for workplace action in a nonthreatening environment; what the Brazilian director Augusto Boal calls a "rehearsal for reality."

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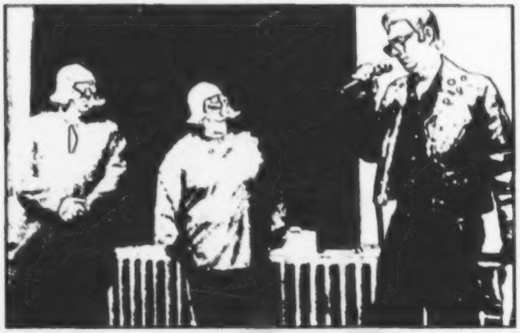
[1] Forum theater is based on the work of Augusto Boal from Brazil. See Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985). See also Teresa Conrow and Linda Delp, "Teaching Organizing Through Workers' Experiences," *Labor Studies Jounal* (spring 1999).



Courtesy Luis Vasquez

Theater for Worker Health and Safety: Reflections

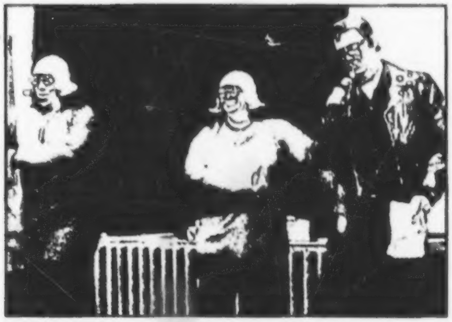
By Peter Dooley

I was first in a skit for political purposes in Michigan in 1983. We were organizing a broad coalition of labor and environmental activists to pass legislation giving workers the right to know about the chemicals they worked with. We wanted to present the absurdity of the dilemma facing workers—that they were required to handle chemicals every day with no information about the hazards or how to protect themselves, not even the names of the chemicals. And we wanted to have fun in the process. Soon we had big burly workers wearing lampshades as chemical container tops. And workers playing the roles of outrageous corporate thugs gave a message no straight chapter and verse could match.

We produce skits collectively, based on the issues that affect people. And we try to challenge norms of racism [and] sexism and address issues of power at work.

The UAW has an annual health and safety conference, and the skit is always the last event of the week. People have gotten a lot of technical information, but the skit helps put it into a bigger, political context. The one thing that really strikes me is how many people remember these skits over the years.

I think it's very powerful to be part of a production that is about educating and making people laugh and having fun. It's a great organizing tool. People work in solidarity when creating the skit, so there's a sense of being part of something, like being part of a movement. Performing in front of a crowd is a scary thing to do alone, but working together helps build people's confidence in themselves and strengthens their ability to be an activist or organizer.


Courtesy Luis Vasquez

Performed by Ergo Elvis and the Ergonomettes as part of a health and safety skit.

"Ouch, I'm Tender"
(to the tune of "Love Me Tender")
©2000 by Luis Vazquez,
UAW Health and Safety Department

Hurt my shoulder, pulling parts
Pain goes down my arm

Carpal tunnel, Bossman says
Won't do me no harm

Went to see the comp'ny doc
All my pain to kill

Inject some steroids, pop some pills
Oh boy what a thrill

Repetition, bend and twist
Screwed up both my wrists

Bending, lifting, what's the risk?
Blew out all my disks

Workers injured, some made lame
Then they're made to blame

Fit the worker to the job
Isn't that a shame

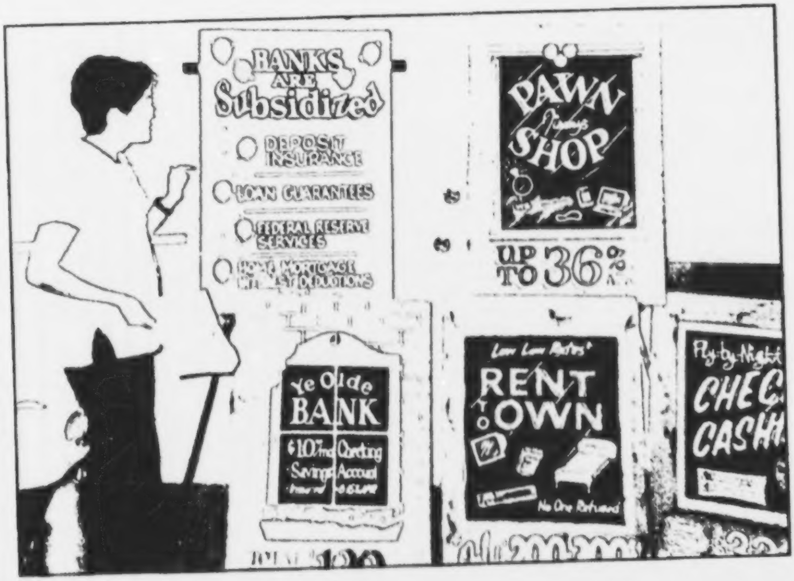
Ouch, I'm tender
This is true
From all these strains and sprains

All my achin' body parts
Drivin' me insane

Awkward postures, excessive force
All my joints to swell

Ergonomics, please come soon
'Cause I hurt like hell

Economics Education



Chapter 6

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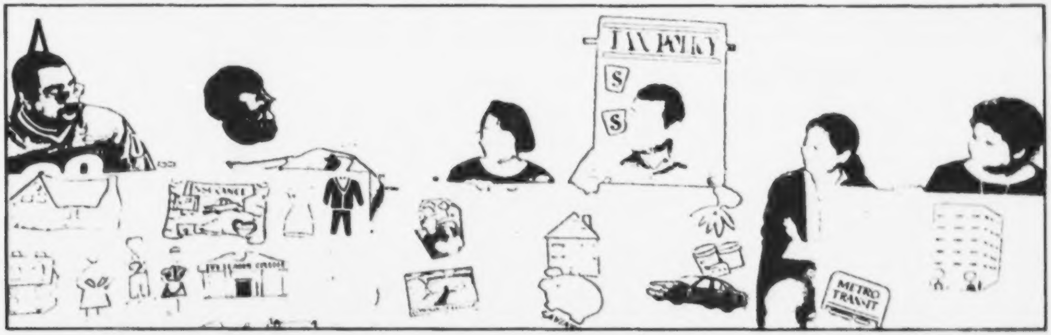


Courtesy Just Economics.

Experiences with Popular Economic Education

By Ellen Teninty and Just Economics

The problems I have been called to fight have led me to learn about economics. Why would a profitable factory close? Why can the public sector finance new buildings but not programs inside the buildings? Why do jobs dominated by women pay less?

As a young labor-community coalition organizer fighting industrial plant closures, I was told that my job was to "direct anger and inspire hope." Since the early 1980s I've used economic education as a way to uncover the policies that create prosperity or hardship, that make winners and losers. A major accomplishment of economic education is that participants no longer feel they are victims of chance and can focus anger at the appropriate target. When we understand that the problem and its solution are systemic and not individual in nature, we help to prevent self-hatred, which can turn into heart attacks and domestic violence. And when we can see the solutions, we are inspired to combine our energies with others' to organize for the power to change economic policies to serve different goals.

Over the years I have had productive and exciting experiences with organized labor and with the many activist union members who serve in their community coalitions. Each of these experiences has enriched my understanding of the severe challenges labor faces and its unique culture, and has reinforced my belief that labor is a critical leader in the movement for economic and social justice. When I reflect on why I love working with unions (and shop stewards in particular), above all I appreciate the raw understanding of power. I also value the combination of realism and "let's fight!" attitude. In my coalition experiences, unions have brought the strategic know-how, productive discipline, and resources that were critical to victory.

I have worked at Just Economics for the past six years. When more than a dozen women founded Just Economics in 1995, we decided to focus on improving the wages and working conditions of low-income people. This focus has kept us in concert with unions. We also decided to dedicate our finite resources to developing long-term relationships with groups doing direct organizing and to integrate economic education into the life of each organization. We hope to infuse economic analysis into multiple aspects of our partner organizations, so that the benefits of our work outlast a specific campaign and become part of organizational practice.[1]

Open the Door with Values

All of our sessions stress that values are the true basis of economics. Most people have absorbed the idea that economics is about esoteric mathematical models or that the economy has a life of its own, out of control like the weather. Mere mortals can report on it but can't influence it. We show that opinions as to "who is deserving?" and "what motivates people?" are actually the basis of lots of economic policy. When we illustrate that values underlie policy decisions and that it is these human choices—not statistics—that drive the economy, participants become motivated to get the information they need to jump into the debate. This has been our most powerful message and our most effective tool for unlocking people's ability to advocate for structural economic solutions to their problems.

Our audiences are all for the slogan "economic justice," but we reveal how differently that can be defined. By neutrally showing many viewpoints on "what is fair," we give space for people to examine their own values more deeply. Tax policy is a particularly fertile topic to check out our culture's ideas about fairness and competing rights. Using examples of three families with different incomes, we first illustrate the "justice" of taxing each family the same dollar amount. We can see that the dollar is the same, but the impact on each family is radically different. Is that equal treatment or not? We then show the results of taxing each family the same percentage and explain why that might be considered fair. Last, we look at the effect of graduating the tax rate on middle and upper income families. We also present the tradition of justice underlying each proposal. In the end, participants are often more persuasive, using more developed economic arguments to discuss the fairness of a particular proposal.

Education and What Else?

We have found that our program of economic education can fulfill many functions in organizational and campaign development. Often when members of a group contact us they have a limited view of the potential results of our collaboration. They usually have a vague idea of what they want people to learn. We say, "Sure, we can teach that. But what else do you need to have happen?" We run through a list of outcomes they could expect, and we structure the sessions based on the different goals the group wants to achieve. The following are some of the ideas and approaches we discuss with organizations when we are conceptualizing a program.

To begin, an economic education program can help create alliances and build a movement. It allows participants to develop a shared economic analysis that includes each constituency's perspective on the economy and a shared agenda for economic justice. Through the training process, groups find ways to connect different constituents' issues (jobs, housing, health care, for example) and different groups' agendas. This process fosters deeper investment in the collaborative effort.

Just Economics worked with Working Partnerships USA in 1997 and 1998 to infuse economic education into the organization's leadership institute. It was successful in helping labor, church, and community leadership develop a shared analysis of the problems in the Silicon Valley economy. We designed the institute to be eight weekly sessions, which included time for people to get to know each other. The process of joint analysis built a deep alliance between community leaders around a common policy agenda. Leadership institute graduates say the relationships and common understanding developed directly contributed to the passage of the Santa Clara living wage ordinance.

Second, an economic education program is useful for outreach to target communities. It brings people into the organization by connecting their economic struggles to a particular campaign. Trainings engage people through discussion of the basic values underlying economic policy and inspire them to participate by offering proactive solutions.

We designed a series of outreach workshops for the Eugene-Springfield [Oregon] Solidarity Network's living wage campaign. A multipart series designed for use in religious settings allowed participants to examine how values determine important standards such as the minimum wage or the federal poverty line. We looked at structural economic changes over the past two decades as well as the network's own living wage proposal. We have designed a slightly different outreach session for secular audiences, which also discusses values, local economics, and particular proposals. The sessions allow activists to engage in structured discussions with a number of people. This type of dialogue can help organizers find people who can contribute to the campaign (such as with a personal story that would make a perfect letter to the editor) and increase turnout.

An economic education program can also strengthen leadership development within an organization. It can support members and leaders with a sophisticated understanding of the economic context of their organizing and campaign work. The process involves building a shared vocabulary and engaging participants' critical thinking skills to analyze the economic situation. Ultimately members and leaders are able to choose between policy options and develop strategy more effectively.

Just Economics worked with AIWA (Asian Immigrant Women Advocates) in Oakland, California, to create workshops on the garment industry, the electronics assembly industry, and economic development in *preparation for specific AIWA campaigns. The workshops successfully supported AIWA members as they made decisions about campaign targets, demands, and messages.*

The new understandings given by economic education can enhance staff capabilities as well. With access to current economic information and a sense of the big picture, organizers can better utilize research, suggest policy solutions, and design campaigns. In addition, organizers can use the skills and tools of popular education to share an economic analysis with constituents, members, leaders, and allies.

We designed a curriculum on the childcare industry and trained staff from the Center for the Childcare Workforce (CCW) to lead it. The curriculum helps CCW staff share their research with childcare workers around the country in a way that inspires strategic action at a local level.

Finally, an education program can transform your organization's approach to the media. By making the connection between values and economic policy, economic education opens the door to greater participation in economic policy debates. Constituents begin to see that they are entitled to an opinion (because everyone has values) and that their opinion matters. The trainings also give organizers language to shape the economic content of media messages, so each campaign adds to the public understanding of the issues and lays the groundwork for future campaigns.

We worked with the Community Assets Campaign, SEIU Local 1985, and several public relations firms to launch an antiprivatization campaign for workers, consumers, and taxpayers.[2] *Using a report issued by the Institute for Southern Studies, Just Economics helped frame the media work to be positive and values based. The coalition was able to put forward a vision for how government can be accountable to the community and set standards to ensure decent jobs.*

Methods

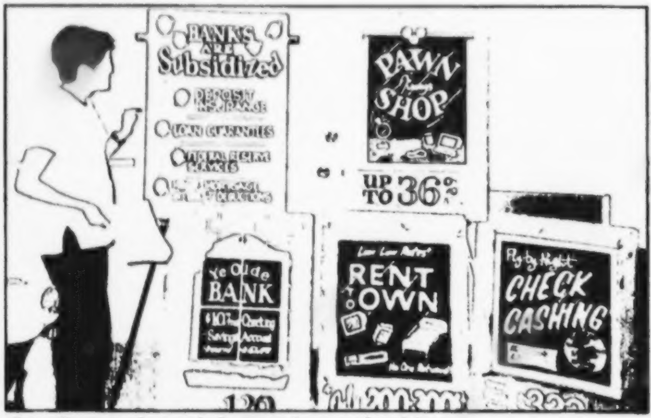
Just Economics is outcome oriented. We want to produce a result, not just educate. So we start by asking, "Who is this for?" and "What changes do you want?" And we consider what participants need to experience, think about, and learn for those changes to occur. We want people to go away with confidence in their knowledge about solutions.

The methods I have used over the past two decades have been called "popular." Maybe it would be more accurate to say that our style is engaging, hopefully never boring. Just Economics evolved from the Center for Ethics and Social Policy, housed in the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, and we used the minister's rule, "People can listen for no more than twenty minutes, even if you are talking about how to get into Heaven." We have consistently been guided by the idea that we want the participants to gain the courage to become outspoken, not to be intimidated by experts once again. Participants remember what they say more readily than what they have heard, so we make sure they get to talk.

We use what we call "live illustrations," which differ from traditional role-plays. We show statistics visually and even use bodies from the audience to make those statistics active and memorable. If the audience has a lot of experience with the topic, we create an analytical framework, interview the audience, and connect their personal stories to the big picture. If we need to tell a complex story that the audience may know little about, like the savings and loan scandal or World Bank structural adjustment programs, we call players from the audience, adorn them with props and hats, and walk through the tale. That way they can follow the money trails and see where policy choices were made.

We have adapted the Small Group Activity Method developed by the Labor Institute in New York City in which facilitators pose a "what would you say if someone said to you . . ." question to help folks jump into policy debate.[3] We ask them to break into small groups to respond to a controversial statement such as, "if you don't like the pay, go get another job." The groups then come together to share what they discussed and the implications of their findings. We debrief the discussions, adding information if it is needed and wanted by participants.

We also use the Small Group Activity Method to help people develop and debate the criteria necessary to evaluate policy options. For example, in an exercise on local economic development, we give participants several choices of what to put on a vacant city block. In another exercise on privatization, we give several choices for how a community can provide transportation services to senior citizens. We then initiate a group discussion on the pros and cons of each option. This approach encourages critical thinking that is useful in an ongoing way rather than just teaching people about the "evils of Wal-Mart" or to be "against privatization."



Just Economics training session on banking.

Courtesy Just Economics.

Sometimes we use a modified version of "Ah-Ha!," an analytical mural drawing technique developed by the Canadian organization GATT-Fly.[4] In this method, several

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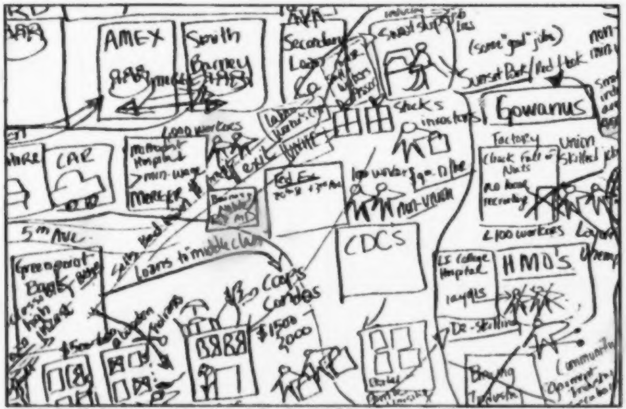
different perspectives are heard and then incorporated into a complex image over a number of weeks. For example, low-wage workers and local small-business owners who are on opposite sides of a living wage campaign get to have both their "truths" in the picture and can think strategically about solutions. This method supports coalition building without alienating any of the constituencies.



"Ah-ha" drawing done with the Fifth Avenue Committee, N.Y.

Courtesy Just Economics.

Evaluation Criteria for Education

Many groups do economic education. Just Economics has developed criteria for what we consider "good" economic education. Here's a checklist we use to look at our own work. We feel economic education should:

1. **Provide context** by presenting economic information in a way that allows people to recognize the relevance of economics to their experience and struggle.
2. **Support critical thinking** by providing tools to help participants question and evaluate information and policy options and develop their own opinions.
3. **Expose values, assumptions, and beliefs** at the root of economic policies so they can be debated and so participants can incorporate their own values into policy proposals.
4. **Reveal power** by demonstrating how a decision-making process works, who the decision makers are, and where their power comes from. Participants can then select strategic campaign targets and points of leverage over those targets and see how change is possible.
5. **Include a race, class, and gender analysis** to ensure that participants are able to talk explicitly about the race, class, and gender implications of policy.
6. **Support participatory research** by encouraging organizers and community members to document their experiences and to engage in analysis at the local level. This approach not only adds depth to existing research but also builds community ownership of information.
7. **Spread a message** by engaging large numbers of people in an issue, by helping them develop effective arguments, and by giving them the opportunity to practice sharing their message.

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8. **Allow for effective collaboration** by helping organizers work with researchers on gathering information.
9. **Identify solutions** by revealing not just the problem but also its causes and the choices we have for solving it.
10. **Help meet organizing and campaign goals** in a way that is relevant to the community.
11. **Engage participants on many levels** by using a methodology that combines visual, written, and oral activities.

Issues Particular to Working with Unions

Union culture has developed in a war environment with workers on the defensive, under constant attack. The attack is specific—from the boss in the workplace—and it is systemic—from the media and political structures. Union staffers scramble under fire to produce concrete results for their members. For these reasons, unions often want to limit issues they deal with to those directly related to their contracts. In general, the pressurized culture of union staff fosters an attitude that education is at worst, fluff, and at best, one more task on an already overflowing plate.

Perhaps that is why many unions have taught their members a "line" to move the program of the day while neglecting to develop members' critical thinking skills. In one instance, a public sector union invited us to do an antiprivatization training. The union had given participants advance reading about the evils of privatization, and members were all wearing NO PRIVATIZING buttons. During our exercise, we asked them to choose a way to provide services with public funds, without using the word "privatization" in describing various choices. Most opted for subcontracting or vouchers, both forms of privatization.

Queremos Justicia!
Queremos Dignidad!
Para los Obreros!
Respeto y Dignidad

Courtesy UCLA Labor Center.

Participants in a Just Economics activity play the role of farmer and peasants to demonstrate the effects of globalization.

We then initiated a discussion of the reasons behind their choices. By the end of the session, they had a greater ability to recognize different forms of privatization. They also had the opportunity to express their views on what should be public and why, as well as what could be private if it were regulated to meet their concerns. At the end of the session, participants said they felt ready to talk with folks in their communities and to organize support for the antiprivatization campaign that would protect their jobs.

Depending on the structure of the local union and the self-confidence and perspective of the local leadership, that empowerment of the rank and file through economic education can seem threatening. Elected local leaders have said to me in confidence, "Why would I want to train my opposition?" As a result, many want staff training but resist steward and membership training. Union leaders can also feel threatened by explicit discussions about systemic racism and sexism. Fear that it will lead to attack on their leadership or that it will be divisive can result in decisions not to engage in economic education, especially if it is perceived as coming from "outside." This fear of divisiveness and a lack of confidence that the process can actually build stronger unity can make labor-based education narrow.

We have found that leaders in both unions and community organizations underestimate the level of sophistication of their members. As a result, it is common for union strategies to be developed by a few people. Some union leaders say that the goal of education is to deliver bodies to implement their strategy. In one case we were told not to share an analysis of the workers' industry because "they might choose a different, less obtainable target." More often than not we have to rely upon the "seeing is believing" phenomenon to convince leaders that their members want a sophisticated understanding of the issues.

It is true that raising controversial issues and seeing a process through to unity takes time. The crisis pace of union life resulting from constant attack makes it difficult to commit to the educational process. But we have seen that members can handle the level of analysis and fast pace of our trainings. We know that "dumbing it down" makes it less useful and boring.

Despite the challenges of bringing economic education to new settings, our overall experience has been refreshing and productive. We relish the occasions when we are asked to be strategically proactive in building a coalition and base for a campaign. Today, our plate is full with work on regional equity and access to health care, as well as with the ongoing education programming described. Whatever the focus, we create a space in all of our trainings to talk about how we are connected through the economy, how values are expressed in the structure of those relationships, and how integral unions are to the functioning of a healthy society.

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[1] Just Economics' partner organizations include: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA); Community Assets Campaign (CAC) led by Grassroots Leadership; Center for the Childcare Workforce (CCW); Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO); Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE); Eugene-Springfield [Oregon] Solidarity Network (ESSN); Jobs with Justice, Louisville, Ky. (JwJ); L.A. Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE); PolicyLink; Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE); Urban Habitat Program; and Working Partnerships, USA.

[2] SEIU Local 1985 represents state, county, and municipal employees in Georgia.

[3] In "Health and Safety Organizing: OCAW's Worker-to-Worker Health and Safety Training Program," labor scholar Craig Slatin writes: "A small non-profit organization called the Labor Institute . . . addressed a range of labor issues. . . . An intern named Les Leopold . . . headed the institute's training activities. . . . Leopold noticed a 'pedagogical problem' in that they were delivering the message that workers did not need conservative economists to run their lives, but instead they needed radical economists to run their lives. Leopold came to believe that to help democratize the unions, an effort to enhance workers' abilities to take more control was necessary. It would mean more than helping them understand the ideas of progressive professionals. . . . Leopold wanted [training activities] to be 'student-centered'; he wanted the focus on dialogue between participants. In 1980 Leopold attended a participatory training conference at the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee. David Clemens, a conference participant, had been working for the British Trade Union Council (TUC) . . . Clemens presented small group training activities that [were] rooted in Freirian methods. Leopold visited the TUC . . . and saw an 'organized process [in which] most of the time the workers functioned in small groups rather than listening to the trainer.' " *New Solutions: A Journal of Occupational Health Policy* 11, no. 4, (December 2001).

[4] According to GATT-Fly, Ah-hah! is "an approach in which all the participants help to produce a picture that describe[s] the world as they [know] it. It involves drawing, in front of the group on a large sheet of paper, symbols representing the economic system as it is described by the participants. Beginning with their own place in it, the participants collectively construct a picture of the economic and political system. They then go on to discuss how it works and what must be done to change it." GATT-Fly, *Ah-hah! A New Approach to Popular Education* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1983), 8. Available from the Catalyst Centre; see "Resources" in this publication.

Laissez Faire But Not Fair for the People
by Jeremy Blasi, UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education*

in this kingdom of capital
we're spreadin' some knowledge
not taught on TV
or in the halls of college

it's the global economy
the neoliberal bomb you see
droppin' like an atomic
on the civil society

the third world's in debt
they could never pay
so they ask the world bank
for a well lit way

they say we'll help you out
if you take our advice
grow coffee and sugar
instead of beans and rice

privatize the land
minimize the salary
but the GNP
can't feed a family

CHORUS (call and response 2X)

It's called...
Laissez faire but not fair for the people
Laissez faire but not fair for the people

well they say free trade
while they trade away freedom
and marx is in the dark
but you know we still see 'em

little sister's on the floor see
sewing some nikes
her brother's at a sweatshop
sweatin' for disney

and mike mouse ain't so fun
for the kids that make him
the little mouse smiles
while their bones are achin'

and they've taken new names
but their motives are clear
structural adjustment
welfare reform here

but their rhymes are wack jack
start shakin' and quakin'
it's time to take back
what the bankers have taken

so we say...
Laissez faire but not fair for the people
Laissez faire but not fair for the people

*Rap written after participating in a Just Economics globalization workshop

Courtesy Metal Trades.

Justice for Avondale Workers

By Susan M. Washington

In 1996 the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions, in partnership with allied organizations, developed and implemented a comprehensive economics education program. The program, known as Common Sense Economics, aims to counter the view of the economy promoted by corporate-backed think tanks and conservative policy makers. The objectives laid out for the program include: to engage workers in a discussion about our economy and how it works; to explain current economic trends and how workers are affected; to emphasize the role that unions play in the economy; and to inspire and mobilize workers to support union actions through organizing and bargaining and through legislative, political, and community activities. Common Sense Economics uses a variety of innovative popular education approaches, including interactive discussions, study group lessons, computer-based media, and written publications to provide workers with a chance to learn and talk about economics from their own experiences.

The following account illustrates how popular education was used to educate workers about the economy during the contract campaign at the Avondale Shipyard in New Orleans. The techniques of the Common Sense Economics program helped to strengthen the campaign and develop future leaders of the union.

Background

In 1993 workers at Avondale Shipyards in New Orleans succeeded in organizing a union, but they spent the next six years embroiled in a struggle to gain union recognition and a first contract because of fierce employer opposition in the form of anti-union tactics and endless legal maneuverings. However, the commitment of the workers, their belief in the union, and their willingness to fight for justice brought the campaign to a successful conclusion.

Avondale Industries is a major defense contractor for the U.S. Navy with about 80 percent of its business involving the building and repairing of ships. For the approximately four thousand employees at the shipyard, low wages, dangerous working conditions, and disrespect were the factors that catalyzed the workers to form a union through the New Orleans Metal Trades Council. Even though the workers won the election to form a union, Avondale employers immediately challenged the results.

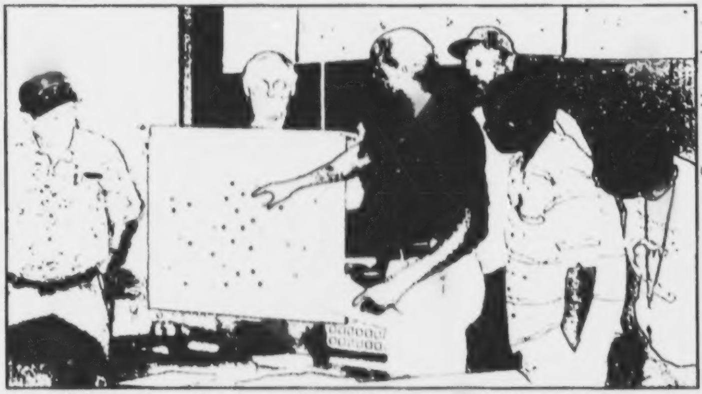
While the election was being challenged in the courts, the workers took their case to the job site, to the community, and to the Louisiana State Legislature. To call attention to their struggle for workers' rights and improved working conditions, they distributed fliers, held rallies and marches, spoke with community groups and religious congregations, and called upon elected officials for support. It was a hard-fought campaign designed to make their voices heard not just locally but nationally, and it worked to rally the support needed to win the campaign.

Education For Action

As the fight for a first contract progressed, the need to develop a strong internal leadership team became an immediate priority. And because safety issues had been key to the organizing campaign, they also became central to the contract campaign. The union had established a multicraft safety committee, and it was out of this committee that members with leadership talent began to be identified: which activists spoke out, and when, where, and how they were active. In this context, it was essential to develop education and training sessions that would help committee members to better handle safety issues and develop leadership skills.

The job of the safety committee was to monitor the workplace situation at the "yard," to maintain solidarity, and to recruit other workers into the union. Most of the workers had had limited training on safety issues, so throughout the campaign a coalition of labor organizations offered classes to the safety committee as a way of building knowledge, awareness, and action. The sessions provided concrete skills, and they served to energize the committee by demonstrating how members could work collectively to improve workplace conditions.

The AFL-CIO Occupational Safety and Health Department, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), and the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB) conducted sessions that focused on workers' rights as they relate to safety issues. The International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM) provided a session on safety standards. And, through a grant from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the George Meany Center



Avondale workers develop a hazard map at a health and safety training, May 2001.

Courtesy Nancy Lessin.

for Labor Studies conducted a two-day training that covered ergonomics, record keeping, and safety committees among other issues. Interest and participation in these sessions began to grow, and the number of committee members increased.

The core group, now meeting on a weekly basis, expanded to include an informal network of stewards, union activists whose job it was to communicate with and mobilize other workers at the yard. With each meeting it became clear that these activists were fast becoming the future leaders of the union because they took ownership of the learning opportunities and applied them on the job site. The union recognized their activism and recommended the development of classes that could provide additional leadership skills.

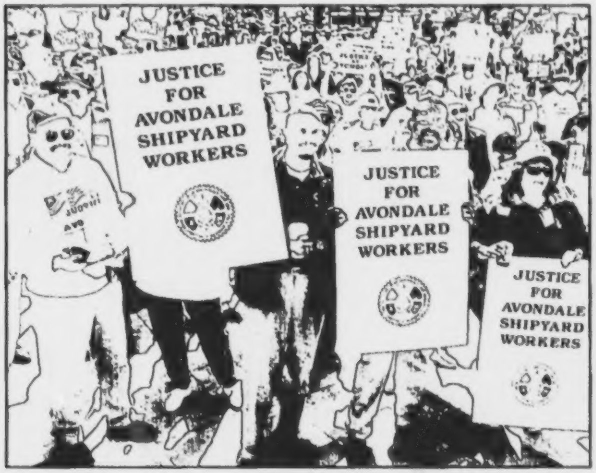
Campaign organizers called upon the AFL-CIO Education Department to help design and conduct a series of leadership development workshops. A proposal was submitted to cover topics under the following broad areas: leadership skills, strategic planning, and communications skills. The education sessions were held once a month beginning in the fall of 1998, with each session in the series building on the previous one. The series was designed to draw upon activists' experiences on the job and in the community and upon skills they had begun to demonstrate in their roles as the leaders of the campaign.

Popular Education: A Powerful Approach to Learning

Because the campaign entailed many activities, AFL-CIO staff determined a timeline for the leadership education sessions that would span several months and would be conducted in three phases. Phase one would primarily consist of a needs analysis, phase two would focus on problem-solving skills, and phase three would address specific leadership skills identified through the outcomes of previous sessions. Goals and objectives for the program were established by working with the campaign organizers to address the leadership needs of the campaign. Broad objectives were identified: to establish a framework for a strong union, to provide basic leadership skills in problem solving and small group dynamics, and to develop a viable union-mobilization structure.

The AFL-CIO Education Department conducted monthly education sessions. The series started with basic information designed to orient activists to the labor movement and to the various roles of union leadership. In these preliminary sessions facilitators utilized traditional education techniques—minilecture, questionnaires, readings, discussion, and brainstorming—offset by educational aids such as flip charts, handouts, and videotapes. These sessions were received with varying degrees of interest.

The most effective tool used for the initial session was the videotape "*Victory is Ours! The Frontier Strikers Win in Las Vegas.*" That videotape depicts the long-awaited victory by hotel workers represented by the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE), who were on strike for five years at the Frontier Hotel before winning a contract in 1998. The employer opposition and obstacles in the Frontier workers' struggle for a new contract were similar to those the Avondale workers faced. While the circumstances and the workplace were very different from those at Avondale, the principle of the struggle was the same: worker justice. After they watched the video, participants said they felt inspired and even more determined to stay in the fight; the video not only let them see other workers in a struggle for justice and dignity but also illustrated their resolve and their commitment to win. The workers saw their own situation reflected and were motivated by the stories of struggle told by the Frontier workers themselves.


JUSTICE FOR AVONDALE SHIPYARD WORKERS
JUSTICE FOR AVONDALE SHIPYARD WORKERS
JUSTICE FOR AVONDALE SHIPYARD WORKERS

Courtesy Bill Burke.

Numerous unions turn out to support the Avondale workers.

Following the initial startup sessions, it became clear that future sessions had to be built around the workers' own experiences, using interactive educational techniques and methodology such as small group discussion and role-plays that would draw them out. Too much reading material or written exercises would not be as effective. The workers attending the evening sessions were often coming off of grueling shifts at the shipyard—they were welders, ironworkers, boilermakers, painters, plumbers, pipefitters, and electricians. They were looking for educational activities that were relevant and practical.

The next round of training focused on worker-to-worker communications at the yard with the ultimate goal of building a stronger mobilization network. This session included a basic communications exercise using a videotape scenario of a union organizer talking with a nonmember about joining the union, followed by a discussion of what the organizer did correctly and where she made mistakes. In the classroom, a demonstration role-play followed by paired role-plays allowed the participants to tailor the conversations to the situation at Avondale.

The activists were then given a follow-up assignment: to map their work area by thinking about whom they came into contact with on a daily basis and what they knew or did not know about their coworkers. They were to bring the information back for discussion at the next session. The shipyard is quite large and spread out, and workers found the mapping technique helpful as they became more aware of their surroundings and began to focus on communications strategies. At the follow-up session several activists reported that they found they often did not come into contact with anyone because their work kept them on the move all day long all over the shipyard. Others reported that they worked around people they did not really know and had never really thought about it but were now interested in learning more about them. Still others began to identify coworkers who expressed a range of attitudes about the union's efforts, from supportive to ambivalent to hostile.

The third phase of the education program included a session that graphically illustrated the link between workers' concerns with pocketbook issues and the need for strong unions. The session was built around several of the overhead charts from the AFL-CIO's Common Sense Economics core message document, the "Basic Rap." Because a lot of numbers and statistics are involved with these charts, the information had to be easily understandable and straightforward; there would be little room for explanation or interpretation. Most of the charts selected for this session were pictorial and described the basic points that needed to be made: wages–down, productivity–up; growing divide between the

Courtesy Lane Windham.

Avondale activists listen to campaign updates during weekly meetings.

"haves" and the "have-nots"; union strength is key to worker power. The end result was that the information was received with great interest. This was just an initial reaction; the momentum of enthusiasm and interest in the room continued to grow.

The next step in this session involved the "Ten Chairs of Wealth Exercise"—originally developed by Marlene Kim, labor economist and founding member of Just Economics—to illustrate what has happened to the concentration of wealth. The exercise involves lining up a row of ten chairs, each representing one-tenth of the wealth in the country as it appeared in 1976. At that time, the richest 10 percent of the population owned half of the wealth in the United States. By 1998, the richest 10 percent owned 71 percent of the wealth.[1] Among ten volunteers, one person was asked to "occupy" five chairs for the 1976 period while the remaining nine volunteers were told to share the other five chairs. Following this illustration, nine of the volunteers were asked to further squeeze together on three chairs, while one individual occupied seven chairs. The point of the exercise was to illustrate the growing wealth gap in our economy with fewer people owning more of the wealth. The participants were astounded at the result, and the room was abuzz with conversation.

To illustrate an additional point about the growing divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots," a walking bar chart was used in lieu of an overhead chart. This exercise was taken from the Common Sense Economics Study Group Manual Lesson 3, "The Incredible Shrinking Standard of Living: Common Sense about Inequality and Poverty," which was prepared by the Center for Popular Economics. In this exercise, participants physically represented different income quintiles—lowest, second lowest, middle, second highest, and top—and took steps to illustrate the changes for the different income groups in the economy over several periods of time: 1950, 1979, and 1997. At each interval, participants stepped forward or backward to illustrate the changes in income for a specific quintile. After moving back and forth, participants discussed the events particular to the period in history and their own life experiences. The exercise was repeated for each time period, and the end result showed that the people in the top income brackets have pulled dramatically away from the lower income brackets, where incomes have been stagnant or have barely moved.

The second half of the exercise was a similar walking bar chart to show changes in income by categories of race and gender, compared with heads of large corporations. The income groups included: white men, white women, African American men, African American women, Latino men, Latina women, and corporate executives. This illustration was based on two time blocks: 1980 and 1998. Again, the end result graphically showed disparities among the groups, with corporate CEOs far outpacing all of the other groups. The room was once again abuzz.

The concluding discussion used all of the points discussed previously to focus on power and the need for workers to unite in order to fight back against a corporate agenda that often keeps workers divided. The purpose was twofold: to remind the activists of the need to build worker power to win at Avondale and to help them recognize that they had the potential to be the leaders who could inspire and motivate other workers at the yard to make this happen. There was a moment of silence, then a moment of thunderous roar. It was as though the room was going to explode into action right there, and it was at that moment that the power of the technique really came to light. The workers, it seemed, were ready to take on anything that might come their way.

By the time the leadership program reached its final phase, the contract campaign had progressed to anticipation of bargaining.[2] The final education session focused on the basics of collective bargaining and what could be expected from a contract. Sample contract language from a union agreement at another shipyard was used to illustrate some of the issues that would likely arise. This last session conducted by the AFL-CIO Education Department was held in July 1999. The employees at the Avondale Shipyard voted overwhelming to approve their first union contract on December 6, 1999.

Outcome and Lessons Learned

Popular education in the context of a worker-centered, activist-based union campaign can dramatically contribute to victories. Having armed workers with the appropriate information and skills in innovative ways, we discovered that the long-term benefits can be tremendous.

It was a truly powerful experience to see how a few short sessions, each designed to build on the next, with a very special group of workers, could yield such action-oriented results. The unity, commitment, and dedication to making their lives and the lives of their coworkers better was a reminder of what the labor movement is all about. The more the workers learned from each other the more they recognized the value of their own experiences and expertise.

The Justice for Avondale Campaign did not begin or end with this brief series of classroom education sessions. It had already begun. The classes merely provided a forum for the workers to recognize and to pool their own strengths. Their victory was sweet, a victory they deserved to win. But there was an even greater victory—the workers had not let the employer or their differences come between them. They had united across crafts, ethnicity, race, gender, and other factors to build a union that would stand for all of them. That's the real power of the union!

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[1] Edward N. Wolff, "Recent Trends in Wealth Ownership, 1983–1998," Working Paper No. 300, Jerome Levy Economics Institute, April 2000.

[2] The final stages of bargaining were complicated by a change in company ownership. While there had been talks of a merger with Newport News Shipbuilding, based in Virginia, Avondale was ultimately purchased by Litton Industries in 1999.

Workplace Health and Safety

D FROM ASBESTOS RELATED DISEASES
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Chapter

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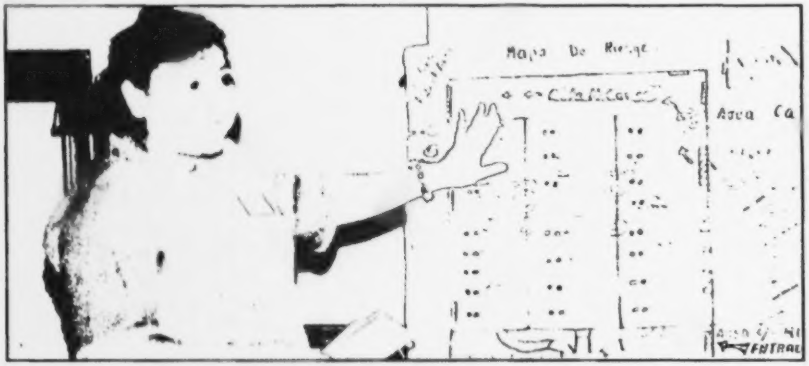

Courtesy UCLA-LOSH.

Building a Worker Health and Safety Movement

By Linda Delp

It is not because people do spectacular things that they are necessarily remarkable—when you do your little bit of good where you are—it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.
—Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu[1]

It was November 1980, and construction at the San Onofre nuclear power plant in San Clemente, California, was wrapping up. The company had pushed to get the plant up and running, hiring new workers and mandating overtime. One of those new workers was Bernie Garcia, a twenty-four-year-old electrician. "One Saturday," he said, "we were told to report at 5:30 A.M. to work on a 4160 volt switch gear that we called the '4Kv bus.' It was an electrical panel so big that the circuit breakers weighed hundreds of pounds. And it had energy sources in different locations that had to be de-energized before we could work on it." But, as Garcia explained, the systems were not always disconnected; when they weren't, the policy was to barricade off the "hot" areas and clearly identify them to the electrical and maintenance workers.

"Many of us were brand new," he continued. "We hadn't even been trained on the safety rules, and some of us had no high-voltage experience. Gerald was kneeling on the ground, ten feet away from me, in an area he thought was de-energized. The next thing I knew, he had been electrocuted."

Bernie Garcia ran to call an ambulance, but Gerald died on the way to the hospital. "This was a profound moment in my life," Garcia said. "Gerald was only in his forties and had children. I didn't really even know him, but I went home from work that night and cried, thinking of his family and knowing it could have been me.

"[The company] kept trying to make all the workers feel guilty, like we did something wrong. I was really appalled. It was clear that corporate America was not going to look after my safety. It was something I had to take responsibility for myself or I would get killed. So I called Cal/OSHA and then got involved with my union, and I've been active ever since."[2]

Garcia's activism extended far beyond the plant where he worked. He was an early member of the Los Angeles Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (LACOSH), one of a nationwide network of COSH groups dedicated to bringing together union and community activists, students, and health and legal professionals to advocate for safe working conditions. "I wanted to educate other workers so they knew more about their rights than I did," said Garcia, who went on to become a leading organizer in the effort to force the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to develop a regulation requiring companies to lock out energized or dangerous equipment during maintenance operations. "If the door had been locked shut on that energized area while we were working on the bus," Garcia said, "Gerald would still be alive today." Garcia is now western states director of the Utility Workers Union of America and continues to educate and advocate for safe working conditions.

The premise of this article is threefold. First, hazardous or stressful working conditions can be a powerful motivator for workers to organize or to become active in their unions. Second, health and safety can build unions if organizers use a popular education approach that builds on workers' own experiences, creates a collective analysis of the source of problems, and develops action strategies to change them. And third, popular education methods in the "classroom" have limited effectiveness without an infrastructure to support workers' ongoing activism. In this article I discuss many of the influences behind the use of popular education to build worker activism for health and safety, the challenges that led educators to seek out innovative teaching practices, and examples of union programs and coalitions that provide the infrastructure to develop union leaders and to advocate for stronger regulations.

Ultimately, the goal of popular education is to create an educated and empowered workforce, supported by unions in its efforts to improve working conditions. Labor activists face many challenges as we struggle to educate for action in an environment where corporate America prevails. The percentage of U.S. workers represented by unions has declined to 13.5 percent and, not unrelatedly, government agencies fail to enforce regulations designed to protect workers.[3] In this climate, health and safety educators and labor activists struggle together to build a labor movement that can ensure safe workplaces.

To borrow from Myles Horton's book, *We Make the Road by Walking*, this article examines the road we have made in developing worker education programs that promote workers' control of job conditions in the period from 1970, when OSHA was created, until 2002.[4] It identifies the hills and valleys created by the political and economic context in which we work and describes the influences that have changed the course of our work. And it concludes with a discussion of the challenges and opportunities confronting us today.

Courtesy UCLA Labor Center.

Linda Delp and Jim Sessions at a popular education workshop, Los Angeles, Calif., December 2001.

Health and Safety: A Union Issue

A recent study commissioned by the AFL-CIO highlights health and safety on the job as the top concern of workers. Out of more than 1,700 adults, 98 percent cited the right to a safe and healthy workplace as essential or very important.[5]

Historically, dangerous health and safety conditions have motivated workers, unions, and their allies to organize. In 1890, miners chartered the United Mine Workers of America largely in response to the heavy toll of mine accidents. More recently, pesticide exposure became a rallying cry for workers and consumers participating in the United Farm Workers' successful grape boycott to support demands for unionization and safer working conditions. Together, the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers (OCAW);[6] the United Steelworkers of America; and the United Auto Workers (UAW) along with the AFL-CIO, played a critical role in passing the 1970 OSHAct, which in turn helped put occupational safety and health on other unions' agendas.[7]

Unions too often see health and safety as only a technical or legal issue. This is not to say that technical expertise is not important. But a narrow technical or legalistic approach leads to a reliance on experts and limits the potential of health and safety to build unions and the labor movement. Worse yet, unions may simply ignore health and safety problems they do not feel qualified to address, leaving workers at the mercy of corporate America's version of safety programs, which often do little more than find ways to blame workers for their injuries and illnesses.[8]

Popular Education: Key to Worker Activism

Why did many health and safety educators adopt a popular education approach? A group of educators, frustrated with the failure of a technical, lecture-oriented approach to address the real issues facing workers, gathered at the Highlander Center in Tennessee in 1980, 1988, and again in 1999.[9] Nancy Lessin, who joined the staff of the Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health in 1979, described why she went to Highlander.

> We had just sponsored a workshop where the experts described the hazards of machine fluids and methods to control exposure such as wiping down machines and other practices. A machinist raised his hand at the end and responded, "All this information is great, but it won't work. Using it slows us down, and we're paid a piece rate so we have to work as fast as we can to make any money." It was clear that our education approach had to change, that education alone was not power, and that we had to learn how to build worker power to control decisions to improve workplace health and safety.[11]

These educators looked to innovative education approaches developed within and outside U.S. borders. Included here are examples of key principles and practices that have been widely adapted by U.S. health and safety educators in efforts to address the following questions: What are some approaches that promote the development of collective vision and strategies? What are specific methods that respect and build on workers' experience? How can we move from dialogue to action? How can we make education accessible to workers with diverse literacy, language, ethnic, and educational backgrounds? How can we create a framework within unions to reach large numbers of workers?

Listening-Dialogue-Action: Adapting Paulo Freire's Principles to Worker Education

The philosophy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire has played an important role in the development of popular health and safety education in the

Key to the passage of OSHA and to the beginnings of the modern occupational health and safety movement in the late 1960s was the visionary leadership of Tony Mazzocchi, then legislative director of the OCAW. He envisioned educated, activist workers, supported by unions and politicized health and legal professionals, advocating for workplace and policy changes. He took political issues outside the Washington, D.C., Beltway, educating OCAW members about the need for a worker health and safety law and mobilizing support from grassroots environmental groups and the media for passage of OSHA legislation. OCAW member activists were the first to use the law after it was passed and were in the forefront of pushing for stronger regulations, pressuring the government to respond to their concerns about chemical and other exposures. Mazzocchi worked with the Montefiore School of Social Medicine to create a cadre of occupational health professionals by recruiting them as students to an innovative internship program with OCAW locals. Many of these professionals eventually worked for government agencies, advocating funding for worker-centered health and safety education and research. The foundation laid by Mazzocchi thus facilitated innovative approaches in the field of worker education.[10]

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United States. Nina Wallerstein and Merri Weinger, who have both worked in Latin America, translated Freiere's belief that education is not neutral into worker education methodology in the United States. In a recent interview, Wallerstein described the listening-dialogue-action framework she uses.

> The critical question is—how are workers going to be participants in their own change? It has to start from listening—that's the key. If we're truly listening to people and the context of their lives and what motivates them—that should create the curriculum. Education is too often based on the idea that this is the information you need—that's totally inappropriate. I tried to turn this approach on its head—education should start from what motivates people and from a political perspective, not an information perspective. When people start sharing about their lives, how they feel powerless, they learn they're not alone. But if you leave it at that you're not going to move anywhere. The challenge is how to translate that into action—action that's based on a critical analysis of power, of what's doable, what are the constraints and openings, who are critical allies, what's the context of the labor movement in 2002? To do that, you need to have a vision—you don't get out of powerlessness without a vision—then you develop a strategy.[12]

A concrete adaptation of this philosophy to worker education is the use of "codes" or "triggers." After listening to workers' concerns and what motivates them, the educator develops a "code," which triggers a facilitated dialogue about the causes of the problems and leads to a plan of action. Codes can be photos, pictures, short role-plays, songs, case studies, or other items with which workers identify. For example, a picture of a worker with a cast and crutches hobbling under a large sign proclaiming "Zero days lost to work accidents" could be used to trigger a discussion about an employer's use of safety incentive programs to discourage workers from reporting injuries and to pressure them to work while ill or injured. The role of the facilitator is to ask key questions that will move the discussion from sharing experiences to analysis and action.[13]

The choice of content and methods to be used will vary based on "listening" to workers in advance through formal or informal surveys, through interviews, or by including workers in developing the curriculum.[14] Educators often face constraints in our ability to adequately listen to worker issues before planning an education program. Some of the methods described below can contribute to the listening process in the workshop itself, helping to provide a more solid foundation for collective analysis and discussion of strategies.

Courtesy UCLA-LOSH.

"Ouch" or "ay" stickers demonstrate where workers experience pain, Laredo, Mexico, November 1998.

Body Maps

Body maps are a simple but powerful activity in which workers place dots on a flipchart diagram of the body in response to the question, "Where does it hurt?" Like many popular education methods, this one originated during grassroots workshops and was adapted for use by educators in a variety of settings. These maps provide a tool for listening to workers and are particularly effective when used to address the growing epidemic of ergonomic problems—back injuries among construction and nursing home workers, carpal tunnel syndrome among data entry operators and meat cutters, and so on. School bus drivers in Massachusetts developed this approach to identify common injuries they experienced.[15] Nursing home workers in California later adapted it, putting "ouch" stickers on each other to demonstrate the pain associated with different lifting activities.[16] The visual image of clusters of colored dots in the back, shoulder, or wrist area clearly highlights the fact that work injuries are not an isolated, individual problem. This recognition then leads to a discussion focused on the questions: "What causes the injuries?" and "How can we prevent them?" As one construction worker said at the end of a workshop, "This is the first time I've known I'm not alone in my pain."[17]

Courtesy Nancy Lessin

Health care workers at a health and safety training discuss their "body map," Mille Lacs, Minn., March 2001.

Risk, or Hazard, Workplace Maps

Risk maps are used to create a visual and collective picture of job hazards that can then be linked to the pain and injuries identified through body maps.[18] This visual representation makes it easier to prioritize and develop a consensus around a strategic organizing plan to eliminate the hazards, making it an effective tool in organizing campaigns.[19]

Courtesy Nancy Lessin.

A George Meany Center Labor Safety and Health Project train-the-trainer workshop demonstrates a "hazard mapping" activity, San Diego, Calif., June 2001.

Workers use butcher paper and markers to diagram their workplace, to categorize the hazards by color, and to prioritize them based on collective criteria such as the number of workers affected, the severity of the problems, and the difficulty of eliminating the hazard. This method, which is participatory and uses workers' experience as its foundation, is "popular" in another sense as well: everyone can participate, regardless of literacy or language, including workers who might be reticent about sharing their opinions in a verbally dominated discussion.

Once drawn, risk maps can be the basis for a critical analysis of why the hazardous conditions depicted exist and who makes the decisions that affect workers' health. Diane Factor recounted an example of a risk map in a recent interview:

> Lucia, a young worker and ACTWU (Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union[20]) member participating in an LACOSH workshop, gathered in a group with other workers from her department where she welded metal trains. Together they sketched the hazards they faced; then Lucia took a colored marker and drew one of the machines used to cut the metal. When asked to explain the hazards on her group's map, she described in detail "*la maquina que come dedos*" (the machine that eats fingers). Although everyone who worked there knew of the machine's danger, the group's risk map created a

Courtesy Nancy Lessin.

Health care workers at a train-the-trainer workshop complete hazard maps, Mille Lacs, Minn., March 2001.

collective awareness of the severity of the problem, the number of workers affected, and the need for them to organize to eliminate the hazard. [21]

The Small Group Activity Method

David Clement from the British Trade Union Congress had attended the 1980 Highlander meeting to demonstrate the Small Group Activity Method.[22] After learning how this method was used in England, Les Leopold and others at the Labor Institute in New York adapted it in two important ways: They worked with the OCAW to develop curricula and create a cadre of worker-trainers who learned to facilitate the small group method among their coworkers; and they included worker-trainers in the curriculum development process, listening to them and ensuring that their concerns—such as plant closings, chemical hazards, and the dominant corporate "blame the worker" approach—were incorporated into the training.[23]

Other unions adopted the concept of worker-trainers and the small group method to different workplace settings. In a recent interview, Irene Moreno, an SEIU member and licensed vocational nurse, described how she became a worker-trainer and how her union uses the small group method to address hazards facing hospital workers and to analyze the root cause of management decisions that affect their health and safety.

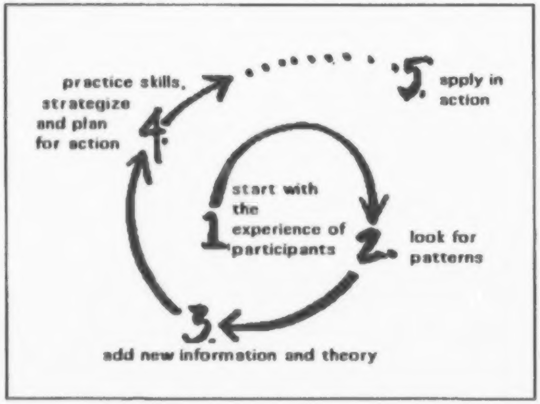
> [The hospital management] looks only at the patients' needs while workers' needs are ignored. I've seen nurses and other health care workers come to work more injured than their patients. I don't know a nurse who has not been punctured. I was stabbed with a scalpel in the operating room and a friend of mine converted to hepatitis C as a result of a needle puncture. [At a workshop I attended] they divided us into groups and we discussed the problems we faced at work. We had a workbook with information and discussion questions, like how many health care workers die of hepatitis each year and why do hospitals provide such dangerous equipment for us to work with?
>
> I got involved in health and safety and my union through the union's worker-trainer program. I became a worker-trainer myself, and we've developed a program to get safer needles into the hospitals. When I train, I demonstrate how the retractable needles work, and it is so obvious that the hospital puts our lives in danger to save a few pennies.[24]

Support for Ongoing Worker Activism: Creating an Infrastructure

The success of these and other methods depends not only on how effectively they are carried out but also on how they are integrated into an ongoing popular education approach.[25] This approach views education as more than just classroom learning; it provides support for workers to take action and to reflect on the outcome of that action. Sometimes also called "participatory design," it involves workers in the entire process outlined in the spiral below and can include them in participatory action research projects to generate additional knowledge that is needed to make strategic decisions.[26]

Ongoing support for worker activism depends in turn on the infrastructure in place. One important example is the union-based worker or peer-trainer model. Another is the national network of COSH groups, which support both union and nonunion worker activists. In this section, I discuss these models as well as the role of government funds in supporting the development of these infrastructures.

The Worker-Trainer Experience: Building Infrastructure for Health and Safety within the Union


practice skills, strategize and plan for action
4.
5.
apply in action
start with the experience of participants
1
2.
look for patterns
3.
add new information and theory

The Spiral Model: Reprinted, with permission, from *Educating for a Change*, 38.

The importance of a union strategy to support the activism of educated workers cannot be overstated. Without a structure that allows workers real influence in the workplace, actions planned in workshops are seldom implemented. With such a structure, however, workers can play a powerful role in their unions and in the larger movement for workers' rights.

Since 1973, UAW contractual agreements have provided for a paid, full-time union health and safety representative in each plant with six hundred or more union members, and the OCAW established worksite-based health and safety education coordinators in 1979. While their functions varied, health and safety representatives were generally trained to identify and resolve problems with specific hazards, to educate other workers, and to work with labor-management health and safety committees. And they were supported by contract language that gave the union the right to file grievances and in some cases to strike if problems were not resolved.[27] These worksite-based programs were an important foundation for the development of the peer or worker-trainer model, which

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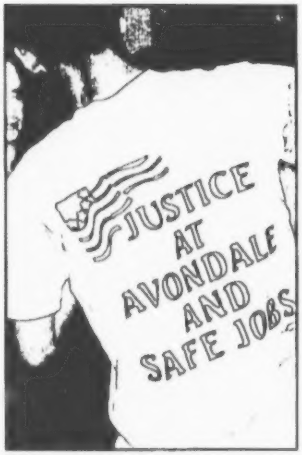
transferred the control of critical health and safety information from experts to the shop floor. Many worker-trainers became strong union activists, bringing a union perspective to health and safety issues by focusing on workplace change instead of individual worker blame, becoming stewards and executive board members, and participating on union bargaining teams.

Ronnie Westmoreland and Steve Cable were among the early OCAW worker-trainers.[28] Both have experienced the death or illness of a family member due to work-related hazards.

Westmoreland, at first minimally active in his union, was recruited to participate in the union's health and safety worker-trainer program after working as a maintenance mechanic for twenty-seven years. "I hated going to work," he said in an interview. "I was working time to get the money to do what I really liked to do, just waiting for retirement. But when I got involved in the worker-trainer program in '93, that changed my whole outlook on life. I started doing something I felt like made a difference." In their discussion of the worker-trainer program, Westmoreland and Cable illustrated three important popular education principles: (1) respect for workers and the importance of starting from their own experiences; (2) critical thinking and analysis; and (3) educating for action.



Courtesy Nancy Lessin.

A health and safety workshop for the Metal Trades Council at Avondale Shipyard, La., May 2001.

"In our program," Cable said, "we use worker-trainers because they have a connection with the people on the shop floor. Because worker-trainers help develop the curriculum, workers read the activities in the workbook and relate to it. You hear them say, 'I've been through that'; then they start talking about their own experiences. Health and safety must be a worker program. To do that you have to start with the education program itself; the people doing the training must be willing to share the power with the participants, to share the decision making."

As educators, Westmoreland and Cable work to motivate people to critically question workplace norms and to participate in workplace decisions that affect their safety. "Our training is for empowerment," Westmoreland said. "It's a tool to help build union activism and question the norm, not to be satisfied with 'we've always done it that way.' As workers we'd always been taught to dodge certain hazards at work; we want workers to question—'why are they there?'" Along with other worker-trainers Westmoreland and Cable became curriculum developers, debating the critical issues that should be included in the curriculum activities. The concept of systems of safety emerged from this process as they discussed how to address management's "blame the worker" approach. Cable described the link between "classroom" discussions of systems of safety and workplace action, a critical step in a popular education approach.

> When people start to question why things are the way they are, then start to participate in deciding what needs to be changed, it's powerful when they take that back to their workplace. One worker in a training program learned about the systems of safety. What we mean by that is changing systems, not blaming workers for accidents. He went back to work and the top of a lift truck had mashed someone's hand. The operator was disciplined, but [the] guy from our class went to the meeting with management and told them, "fix the way it works, don't discipline people; those trucks shouldn't be designed to swing around the way they do." With pressure from the union, the company changed every lift truck, something no one had thought of proposing before.

The worker-trainer program opened both men's eyes: "We realized it wasn't just a fight at the local level but at the national level," Westmoreland said. He attributed his awareness to the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)-sponsored National Trainers' Exchange, which brought educators in the hazardous waste training program from across the country together for the first time.[29] "Before," he continued, "I was in my own little world. At the trainers' exchange, not only did I learn about different education methods, but I saw myself as part of a bigger picture."

Part of that bigger picture includes the other unions that have adopted the worker-trainer model.[30] Irene Moreno described how her involvement in SEIU's worker-trainer program facilitated her own development as a leader. "After my experience as a worker-trainer," she said in a recent interview, "I became more involved with the union and have been working to pass safe needle laws. I'm now on the national Kaiser sharps committee that approves the products they purchase. And just recently, I joined the staff of SEIU Local 250 as coordinator for all the health care professional and technical councils."[31]

As the worker-trainer program grows, unions have begun meeting together to share their experiences. In February 2002 nearly 150 worker-trainers from six unions gathered at the George Meany Center for their first annual joint "trainer tuneup," the start of an effort to further expand and coordinate the program nationally.

Courtesy Nancy Lessin.

"Women of Steel" take a break at a health and safety train-the-trainer workshop, Dawson, Penn., March 2001.

The effectiveness of worker or peer-trainer programs has been proven in several evaluation programs. Workers trained by their peers in a Michigan UAW-GM ergonomics education program were as knowledgeable and skilled as those trained by university instructors, but workers were more satisfied with the training provided by their peers than by trainers with a university background. In this program, trainers could adapt education methods to the variety of learning styles among workers in their department, bringing technical information to life.[32]

Activist consultants Tom McQuiston and Tobi Lippin have been evaluating the NIEHS worker-trainer program for several years.[33] They recently developed an innovative participatory evaluation project whereby worker-trainers themselves set the training goals and develop the evaluation program. Lippin stated that there are many workers like Westmoreland, Cable, and Moreno, "zillions of them, who are an underutilized resource. Worker-trainers have taken on leadership roles as stewards; at approximately twenty sites they have trained the entire plant and participate on incident investigation teams with a 'systems approach' to investigating accidents and near misses instead of a 'blame the worker' approach." McQuiston added:

> The worker-trainer program has important implications beyond what's often thought of as popular education methodology. It has been critical for organizational development, creating a level of expertise that resides more broadly among workers. Key to popular education is not the method per se but the opportunity for people to reflect and to discuss values and conflicts, to consider who controls information. If popular education can only be done by a handful of people who are experts in popular education, it's not really popular education. What's important about the small group activity method is that it is a framework that has

been successfully adopted for use by worker-trainers on a large scale. But it is just that—a framework that is open to critiques of both its value and its limitations.

The Influence of U.S. Social Movements

Influences from abroad were important to the development of a popular education approach in worker health and safety education. But labor educators in the United States have made their own road, influenced by but distinct from that in other countries. U.S. social justice movements profoundly affected the development of popular education philosophy and activism among workplace health and safety educators and led to the creation of another infrastructure to support workers, a national network of COSH groups.

In Chicago, in 1972, a group of civil rights activists recognized the serious abuses facing workers in their own hometown.[34] They created the nation's first COSH group to confront the lack of basic worker rights to a safe job. Through COSH, union activists, physicians, lawyers, students, and community activists joined together in a coalition to educate workers, research hazards, and change policy to improve workplace conditions. By 1980 a loose national network existed, including the newly created LACOSH in Los Angeles, in which Bernie Garcia became involved.

Like the civil rights activists who developed the first COSH group in Chicago, Darryl Alexander of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) credits the civil rights movement with giving her "a fundamental understanding of human rights and dignity. I realized that there is no individual solution. We have to organize collectively to change our society. It was only natural to become involved in worker and union issues."[35] Alexander now directs the AFT's health and safety department and has initiated a national peer train-the-trainer campaign with custodial maintenance workers, bus drivers, and school secretaries, all workers who have now become activists in their union.

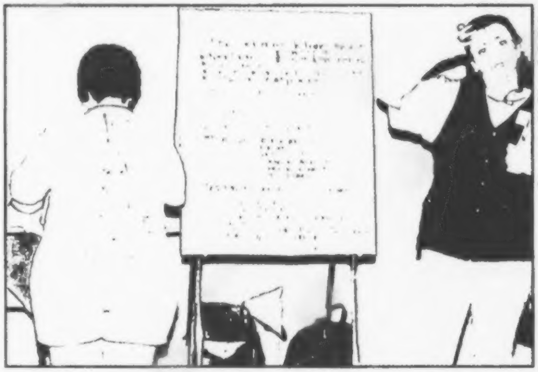
Susan Moir, now at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell and involved in MassCOSH, learned her skills through the feminist movement. After sustaining an injury as a bus driver, she spearheaded efforts to purchase ergonomically designed busses. She credits WILD, the Women's Institute for Leadership Development, for the organizing, leadership, and education skills she developed and is now applying to ergonomic education programs with the building trades.[36]

Jamie Cohen, now at the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), was motivated by occupational and environmental exposures in Tennessee, where, as a student teacher, she realized that many of her students had birth defects from exposure to chemicals in the environment and from their parents' occupational exposure at the local Kodak plant. A convergence of experiences—Highlander workshops, her internship with a Tennessee OCAW local under the guidance of Tony Mazzocchi, and the growing COSH movement—led Cohen to play a role in developing TennCOSH.[37]

COSH and Allied Groups: Building Regional Infrastructure

While some international unions embraced health and safety education for their members through worker-trainer programs, there was also a need for grassroots networks of activists at the regional level to fight for safe working conditions.

COSH groups were influential in the 1980s Right to Know movement to provide workers and communities with information about workplace chemicals. They circumvented Ronald Reagan's refusal to develop a federal OSHA regulation by organizing to pass Right to Know laws at the state and local level, thereby forcing OSHA to promulgate the federal Hazard Communication Standard to address industry concerns about the growing number of different, and sometimes stricter, state and local regulations.[38]



Courtesy UCLA-LOSH.

Participants at a train-the-trainer workshop use a "toxic t-shirt" to demonstrate how chemicals affect the body, Laredo, Mexico, November 1998.

COSH groups and allied organizations continue to mobilize, using education to develop leadership and health and safety regulations. Two such allied organizations in California, the UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program (LOSH) and the UC Berkeley Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP), form key links between the state's universities and its grassroots health and safety education movement. When efforts to push for a federal ergonomics standard were stalled by industry opposition, education efforts by these programs and a coalition of unions were instrumental in creating the first state ergonomics standard in California. LOHP Director Robin Baker described the education program:

> Some of the training addressed the technical aspects of ergonomic risk factors and how to control the hazards. However, more important, the training has provided a forum for unionists to explore why these hazards exist and why there have been no government regulations to

> protect workers from ergonomic hazards, the single most common cause of disability for the American workforce. This training, carried out in collaboration with the state labor federation, played an important role in the California labor movement's ability to mobilize successfully for passage of the first state ergonomic standard in 1996. Although the standard itself is deeply flawed, and not nearly all that labor fought for, it was a remarkable success against the management community's united front. Industry brought in their big guns to adamantly oppose opening the door to any ergonomics regulation. This created a cadre of dedicated union activists, many of whom had not been previously active in their unions.[39]

Today, more than twenty COSH groups are working with immigrant workers, unions, and community-based groups and collaborating with university-based labor centers and worker occupational safety and health programs.[40]

Government Funds for Infrastructure in a Shifting Political Climate

In the 1970s, Dr. Eula Bingham, the visionary OSHA director under the Carter Administration, recognized the importance of building a long-term infrastructure to support worker health and safety activism. She created an innovative "New Directions" funding program whereby OSHA gave grants to support the creation of worker health and safety education programs in unions, university-based programs, worksites, and nonprofits such as COSH groups. New Directions provided the stable funding needed for health and safety educators to develop worker-centered curricula and the funds for educators to gather to exchange ideas at the Highlander Center in 1980 and at annual meetings of New Directions grantees in Washington, D.C.

Courtesy UCLA-LOSH.

Participants demonstrate job tasks; others guess their ergonomic risks, Laredo, Mexico, November 1998.

By 1988, when popular educators gathered at Highlander the second time, the political and economic landscape had drastically changed. Reagan's anti-union legacy was well established, beginning with his firing of the air traffic controllers and continuing with his attack on worker health and safety. New Directions' funding for worker education had been drastically cut. The proposed federal OSHA "Right to Know" regulation, which would have given workers the right to information about the hazards of the chemicals they worked with, had been withdrawn in February 1981, less than a month after Reagan took office, and was only passed in November 1983 as a result of organizing. Despite these setbacks, labor activists built on the growing public concern over environmental issues such as hazardous waste and asbestos exposure, pressuring the government to regulate worker as well as environmental exposure to these hazards. As a result, OSHA and EPA asbestos cleanup regulations included mandates for worker training, and in the late eighties NIEHS, like OSHA in the seventies, initiated a funding program for unions, university-based programs, and COSH groups to develop worker education programs that would provide funds for the innovative worker-trainer program described above.

The popular educators gathered at Highlander in 1988 faced many challenges. A COSH activist who participated in both Highlander meetings stated the obstacles plainly: "OSHA funding had dried up with the Reagan era, and we faced the challenge of how to do popular education when the funds were for prescribed technical skills training."[41] Participants were charged with putting activism back into health and safety education, and they left determined to apply popular education principles to their work of building a movement of worker health and safety activists despite the limitations they faced.[42]

The two important trends described above have facilitated the development of an infrastructure to support a health and safety education movement in the subsequent years. Several unions have educated a cadre of worker-trainers, activists who educate and organize their coworkers throughout the country. And at a regional level, COSH and allied groups serve as an important bridge, bringing together activists from different unions, from

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The Toxic Avengers *teatro* in front of the Martinez Shell refinery on Workers' Memorial Day.

universities, and from the health and legal professions to educate and organize for stronger state and local regulations, including funding for worker education programs.

Challenges and Opportunities: Where Do We Go from Here?

We face numerous opportunities and challenges as we strive to build a movement of health and safety activists who participate in workplace decisions that affect their health, who develop leadership roles within their unions, and who work together to push for the development and enforcement of strong governmental health and safety regulations.

Obtaining funds for worker health and safety education presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Under some U.S. political administrations, government funds for health and safety education have been an important source. These funds present an opportunity to develop innovative curricula and programs such as worker-trainer networks. They also present considerable challenges, including the instability that comes with changes in government priorities or with mandates to focus on strict technical topics that may not build the union.[43] One model for more stable funding is that developed by the UAW and the Building Trades, whereby a small percentage of wages on a "cents-per-hour" basis goes toward an education fund.[44]

Workplace hazards are changing with recent shifts in the U.S. and the global economy. As many industries undergo reorganization (a euphemism for layoffs), the remaining workers are forced to do more work in less time. The result has been widespread stress and ergonomic problems.[45] While we push for stronger regulations we cannot depend on OSHA to address these or other hazards, nor can we depend on technical or legal remedies. Only an educated workforce, supported by unions that take their members' health and safety concerns seriously, can build power to control workplace decisions to improve working conditions.

The labor movement, however, faces many challenges, not the least of which is the need to organize to reverse the decline in union membership. The challenge we face as health and safety educators and activists is to create a vision for worker health and safety education that will form the foundation of a movement to address the widespread effects on workers of industry restructuring and speedups. A vision that will incorporate worker health into union organizing campaigns, which in turn highlight the right to a safe job as an issue at the core of workers' desire for dignity and respect, an issue that motivates them to organize and become active in their unions. A vision that will strengthen unions' ability to bargain for health and safety contract language and organize for governmental regulations and funding that promotes workers' rights, such as the right to paid time for health and safety education. A vision that will make health and safety education truly popular in all senses: by providing workers with critical analysis skills to participate in workplace decisions that affect their health, their lives, and those of their families; by expanding the network of worker-trainers and the skills they need to reach all workers regardless of language, literacy, or educational background; by expanding labor-community alliances for safe jobs through organizations such as the COSH network. Most importantly, we need to create a vision that will strengthen the labor movement's ability to support ongoing worker activism for a safe and healthful work environment. [46]

This article is based on interviews with twenty-one educators and on material provided by many more. I want to thank all those who generously gave of their time and resources by consenting to interviews, providing feedback on earlier versions of this paper, and contributing photos and other material. I cannot possibly do justice to all the important popular education work happening throughout the country to build a worker health and safety movement. Many thanks to: Darryl Alexander, AFT; James August, AFSCME; Robin Baker, UC Berkeley LOHP; Gail Bateson; Marianne Brown, UCLA-LOSH; Steve Cable, PACE; Jamie Cohen, SEIU; Peter Dooley, UAW; Diane Factor; Rick Engler, PhilaPOSH; Bernie Garcia, Utility Workers; Omar Henriquez, NYCOSH; Michael Kushner, SEIU; Les Leopold, Labor Institute; Nancy Lessin, Massachusetts AFL-CIO; Tobi Lippin, New Perspectives; Tom McQuiston, PACE; Susan Moir, UMass Lowell; Susan Schurman, George Meany Center-The National Labor College; Irene Moreno, SEIU 250; Jackie Nowell, UFCW; Deborah Rosenstein, UFCW; Eileen Senn; Craig Slatin, UMass Lowell; Jeancarmel St-Juste, MassCOSH; Nina Wallerstein, University of New Mexico; Merri Weinger; Ronnie Westmoreland, PACE; and Dorothy Wigmore, McMaster University, Canada.

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[1] Archbishop Desmond Tutu, interview by Dawn Engle and Ivan Suvanjieff, Cape Town, South Africa, July 20, 1995. See http://www.peacejam.org/html/interview.html.

[2] Bernie Garcia, Utility Workers Union of America, telephone conversation with author, March 25, 2002.

[3] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Union Members Summary," Washington D.C., January 17, 2002, http://stats.bls.gov/news.release/union2.nr0.htm.

[4] Myles Horton and Paulo Freire, *We Make the Road by Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, ed. Brenda Bell, John Gaventa, and John Peters (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1990).

[5] Results are from a September 2001 report based on a telephone survey of 1,742 adults, with a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percent, conducted July 5–9, 2001.

[6] The Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers (OCAW) and the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU) merged in 1999 to form the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union (PACE).

[7] Daniel M. Berman, *Death on the Job: Occupational Health and Safety Struggles in the United States* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978): 32, 136, 160.

[8] Even unions that do confront health and safety issues may fail to see the potential to involve workers and develop their leadership. Eileen Senn, formerly an industrial hygienist with the Boilermakers' Union and an organizer of Highlander gatherings of popular educators, said she was motivated to adopt a popular education approach in order to "move our union from using health and safety as a bludgeon when they were pissed at management to developing rank-and-file leadership on the issue," telephone conversation with author, February 6, 2002.

[9] For more information about the important role of the Highlander Center, see the articles in this publication, "Popular

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Education, Labor, and Social Change" by John Hurst and "Highlander and Labor" by Susan Williams with Jim Sessions.

[10] Les Leopold, telephone interview with author, June 12, 2002. For more information, see Craig Slatin, "Training for Action: The Political Economy of the Superfund Worker Training Program," (Ph.D. diss., Univ. of Massachusetts, Lowell, 1999); and Gail Bateson, "Recreating Union-Based Internships: A Key to Rebuilding the Occupational Health and Safety Movement," (manuscript, June 26, 2002).

[11] Nancy Lessin, health and safety coordinator at the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, telephone conversation with the author, November 28, 2001.

[12] Nina Wallerstein, telephone conversation with the author, February 9, 2002.

[13] See Nina Wallerstein and Merri Weinger, "Health and Safety for Worker Empowerment," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 22, no. 5 (November 1992). The editors discuss ways to apply Freire's principles to worker education, including details about developing codes and a framework to guide facilitators in leading a discussion.

[14] For information about designing an education program with a popular education approach, see Nina Wallerstein and Robin Baker, "Labor Education Programs in Health and Safety," *Occupational Medicine: State of the Art Reviews* 9, no. 2 (1994).

[15] Susan Moir and Tolle Graham of MassCOSH used body maps with bus drivers in the mid-1980s. Dorothy Wigmore from Canada then added colors to differentiate injuries specific to different jobs and introduced the technique in a variety of Canadian union settings.

[16] Diane Factor developed an ergonomics program for nursing home workers with OSHA funding while working at the UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) Program.

[17] From a training session for the Operating Engineers Local 4, 1996, reported by Dorothy Wigmore.

[18] Jorge Mujica demonstrated this method that he, Jorge Villegas, and Mariano Noriego had brought to the United States from Mexico when working with the COSH group in Los Angeles to develop an education program for Mexican American workers. The concept of homogeneous groups of workers identifying the hazards they faced originated with the Italian Workers' Model. This groundbreaking approach mixed technical, legal, and political approaches to workplace health and safety. This concept was adapted for use in Mexico, Brazil, Canada, Mozambique, the United States, and other parts of the world. For more information, see Michael R. Reich and Rose H. Goldman, "Italian Occupational Health: Concepts, Conflicts, Implications," *American Journal of Public Health* 74, no. 9 (September 1984); and Giorgio Assennaot and Vicente Navarro, "Workers' Participation and Control in Italy: The Case of Occupational Medicine," *International Journal of Health Services* 10, no. 2 (1980).

[19] Dorothy Wigmore has further developed workplace maps to integrate health and safety and organizing. Participants draw the physical layout of their workplace as a foundation and then add layers of information. This can include hazards, health symptoms, and social interactions such as the location of union supporters or activists. For more information, e-mail her at dorothyw@web.ca.

[20] Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) merged in 1995 to form UNITE!, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

[21] Diane Factor worked with LACOSH to adapt the risk map approach learned from our Mexican colleagues and compañeros. For other examples of how risk maps have been used, see UCLA-LOSH, *Risk Mapping: A Group Method for Improving Workplace Health and Safety* (Los Angeles: Regents of the Univ. of California, 1996); Jorge Mujica, "Coloring the Hazards: Risk Maps Research and Education to Fight Health Hazards," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 22, no. 5 (November 1992); Margaret Keith et al., "Identifying and Prioritizing Gaming Workers' Health and Safety Concerns Using Mapping for Data Collection," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 39, no. 1 (2001); Marianne Brown, "Worker Risk Mapping: An Education-for-Action Approach," *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy*,

Special Section 5, no. 2 (winter 1995); Michele Gonzales Arroyo, Eugene Darling, and Betty Szudy, "Risk Mapping for Change: LOHP's Experience with Electroplating Shops," *New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy, Special Section* 5, no. 2 (winter 1995). For more details about using risk and body maps, go to http://www.hazards.org/diyresearch/index.htm.

[22] See article by Jenice View, "Just Transition Alliance," in this publication for a description of the small group method.

[23] David Clement represented the British Trade Union Congress (TUC), which used the small group method in all their stewards' training. (Stewards had the right to eight hours of paid time twice a year for health and safety training.) He worked with Eileen Senn from the Boilermakers Local 802 to develop one of the first manuals, "Fighting Shipyard Hazards," to use this approach in health and safety training in 1981 in the United States. Les Leopold went to England to learn more about the Small Group Activity Method and incorporated it into the economics education programs of the Labor Institute, which Tony Mazzocchi had founded in 1974. Mike Merrill described the philosophy behind the method and behind the use of worker-trainers in "Sharing Power: OCAW Worker-Trainers and the Small-Group Activity Method," *New Solutions* 5, no. 2 (winter 1995).

[24] Irene Moreno, SEIU Local 250, telephone interview with author, February 4, 2002

[25] A variety of methods in addition to those described here are used in health and safety training and in other labor education programs as well. These include case studies, role-plays, methods to teach participatory action research (see Pam Tau Lee and Robin Baker's article, "Las Vegas Hotel Workers Find a Voice," in this publication), and forum theater (see article, "Forum Theater," in this publication). See "Resources" at the end of this publication for a partial list of organizations that have developed materials for popular health and safety education.

[26] Two sources that provide a framework for developing education programs that use a popular education approach are Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James, D'Arcy Martin, and Barb Thomas, *Educating for a Change* (Toronto: Between the Lines Publishing, 1991); and Bev Burke, Jojo Geronimo, D'Arcy Martin, Barb Thomas, and Carol Wall, *Educating for Changing Unions* (Toronto: Between the Lines Publishing, 2002). An example of an education program for "ergonomic monitors" that describes the importance and challenges of establishing structural support for workers to take action is in Susan Schurman, Barbara Silverstein, and Susan Richards, "Designing a Curriculum for Healthy Work: Reflections on the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers-General Motors Ergonomics Pilot Project," *Occupational Medicine: State of the Art Reviews* 9, no. 2 (April–June 1994).

[27] The UAW program is described in Margrit Hugentobler, Thomas Robins, and Susan Schurman, "How Unions Can Improve the Outcomes of Joint Health and Safety Training Programs," *Labor Studies Journal* (winter 1990). The OCAW program is described in Slatin, "Training for Action."

[28] Ronnie Westmoreland and Steve Cable, telephone conversation with the author, November 11, 2002.

[29] Denny Dobbin initiated the NIEHS Hazardous Waste Worker Training Program, which provided a critical source of funds for unions and university-based worker education programs. The use of worker-trainers was initially questioned by some but ultimately became one of its most innovative programs. NIEHS-funded Trainers' Exchanges were coordinated by UCLA-LOSH and the UC Berkeley Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP).

[30] These include the UAW, ICWU Consortium, AFSCME, SEIU, Railroad Workers, and PACE.

[31] Moreno, interview.

[32] Schurman, Silverstein, and Richards, "Designing a Curriculum for Healthy Work."

[33] For information about the relationship between health and safety education and workplace change, see Tobi Lippin, Anne Eckman, Katherine Calkin, and Thomas McQuiston, "Empowerment-Based Health and Safety Training: Evidence of Workplace Change from Four Industrial Sectors," *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* 38 (2000).

[34] The initial group of activists was involved with the Medical Committee for Human Rights.

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[35] Darryl Alexander, telephone conversation with author, January 17, 2002.

[36] Susan Moir, telephone conversation with author, November 13, 2001.

[37] Jamie Cohen, telephone conversation with author, January 17, 2002.

[38] The Federal Health Communication Standard was passed in November 1983 and became effective in 1985 and 1986. For more information, see Thomas McGarity and Sidney A. Shapiro, *Workers at Risk: The Failed Promise of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993).

[39] Robin Baker, letter to author, March 2002.

[40] Several COSH groups have begun innovative programs to reach and organize nonunion workers. For example, Jeancarmel St-Juste from MassCOSH helped form a labor-community alliance to organize workers around hazards in a meatpacking plant. Omar Henriquez from NYCOSH included workplace health and safety rights in ESL classes. For a list of COSH groups, see the NYCOSH website at http://www.nycosh.org.

[41] Lessin, telephone conversation.

[42] Two journal volumes include numerous articles describing the application of a popular education approach to worker health and safety education: Nina Wallerstein and Merri Weinger, eds., *Empowerment Approaches to Worker Health and Safety Education*, vol 22, no 5 of *American Journal of Industrial Medicine* (1992); and Craig Slatin, ed., "Health and Safety Training," *New Solutions, A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy* 5, no. 2 (1995). In addition, the George Meany Center for Labor Studies has developed a comprehensive train-the-trainer manual, which includes numerous activities and materials that can be used to develop a health and safety program based on a popular education approach.

[43] Two seminal articles include examples of how Scandinavian countries have defined a healthy work environment more broadly than the United States and have funded progressive worker education and participation programs: Steven Deutsch, "Worker Learning in the Context of Changing Technology and Work Environment," and Hy Kornbluh and Richard T. Greene, "Learning, Empowerment and Participative Work Processes: the Educative Work Environment," both in *Socialization and Learning at Work: A New Approach to the Learning Process in the Workplace and Society*, ed. Heinz Leyman and Hy Kornbluh (Vermont: Gower Publishing, 1989).

[44] For information about the UAW program, see Schurman, Silverstein, and Richards, "Designing a Curriculum for Healthy Work."

[45] A particularly egregious industry is meatpacking where amputations, strains and sprains, and other musculoskeletal problems are all exacerbated by the speed of the line and by reorganization in the last ten years aimed at ridding the industry of union representation, Jackie Nowell, UFCW health and safety director, telephone conversation with author, February 5, 2002.

[46] Educators and activists continue to meet at the Highlander Center to discuss these challenges, most recently in 1999. Other forums include the annual meeting of occupational health activists at the American Public Health Association, the annual COSH meetings, and the biannual AFL-CIO Health and Safety conference. To subscribe to a listserv of health and safety popular educators, e-mail popednetwork-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

"The Work-A-Rena"
(to the tune of "Macarena")
©1998 by Luis Vazquez,
UAW Health and Safety Department

Workin' hard and fast won't cause you no pain-a
But if you decide you wanna complain-a
We will tell you its all in your brain-a
Hey work-a-rena!

Lift a lotta stuff, it can cause a back strain-a
Spill a chemical, flush it all down a drain-a
For the accident we keep a lawyer on retain-a
Hey work-a-rena!

Too much noise and heat will drive you insane-a
But we'll make sure the worker takes the blame-a
Then we'll tell you you must change your behavior
Hey work-a-rena!!

Popular Education in the Classroom

Chapter

8

Courtesy SEIU District 1199E-DC.

Workplace Learning, Literacy, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

By Laura Chenven

All education is political. It can reproduce the status quo and current power relationships or it can challenge and attempt to change them. That contradiction is inherent in education and explains why there are fights about who controls it and what kind of resources will be expended. Literacy education is, of course, no exception. Indeed, popular education developed as a struggle to assist people in oppressed communities to read. But the goal was to be able to read the written word as well as the world around, so that people could take action to change their situations.

In the American workplace, however, literacy education has been somewhat different. Basic skills education, which includes literacy training, has often been driven by employers or public agencies who advance a deficit model.[1] In this model, problems with productivity, low profit margins, workplace accidents and injuries, or the failure of work reorganization are often blamed on workers and their "low skills." When the problem is defined in this way, the solution is clear: teach the workers the basic skills they lack. Rectify the deficit. Teach them what they need to know to help the employer succeed and improve the bottom line.

This solution, based on the employer-defined problem, often does not work to anyone's satisfaction, especially when it is determined by employers and adult educators without any input from the subjects of that solution. Workers who have not had a chance to define the problem may very well oppose the solution.

For example, workers may view an employer-imposed training program as an attempt to override seniority or as a way to impose more work without commensurate compensation. They may not participate in an employer-sponsored learning program for fear of job loss or other recrimination based on their real or perceived lack of basic skills. And employers may wonder why attendance is so low when they provide free, voluntary programs.

Popular education, on the other hand, takes a very different approach. It is about problem posing and developing critical faculties. It is about giving workers the opportunity to analyze the problem from their own perspective and to help determine a solution. And union participation in basic skills programs will, we hope, mean that workers have a significant voice in what action will take place and how it will unfold.

Not only employers but teachers also bring their own class and educational biases to workplace education programs. In one staff development program, adult education teachers were shown a labor cartoon as part of an exercise to help them incorporate popular education methods into their curriculum.[2] The cartoon depicts a researcher asking a worker how he spends his money.[3] The worker tells the researcher what percentage of his paycheck he spends on expenses such as food and rent, all of which add up to more than 100 percent of his paycheck. The trainer asked the teachers to define the problem portrayed in the cartoon. Almost every teacher identified the problem as budgeting and suggested the development of curriculum to teach percentages, fractions, and how to keep a balanced budget. Of course when the same cartoon was presented to union workers, they identified the problem as low wages and suggested that the solution would be to organize for a pay raise or lower rent.

Education at the workplace has the potential to reproduce the unequal power between labor and management, especially when the educators bring their own biases to the program. However, where there are unions there is a challenge to power and the opportunity for worker-centered popular education emerges.

The Canadian Labour Congress, through its Workplace Literacy Project, has popularized a notion of literacy as political and as a tool for the labor movement. To quote from the project's journal, *Learning Together, Solidarity at Work*:

> Business usually defines literacy in the context of productivity and profit. But the union believes a worker-centred curriculum must address the broad range of the learning needs of workers. Unions are interested in seeing the worker develop as a full human being who has many different roles—in the family, the union, the workplace, and the community. . . . Literacy in its fullest sense is about critical reflection and action. It is more than developing the skills we need to carry out particular tasks. [It] is about creating learning experiences that

> build on our lives in a way that strengthens us individually and collectively to be active and participating citizens. It is also about developing the union's capacity to engage in the struggle for social justice.[4]

The Canadian Labour Congress has embraced this notion of literacy education for change. Its institutional support has led to the development of high-quality worker-centered resources, networks, and programs across Canada. The AFL-CIO, on the other hand, has not taken as strong an institutional stand. Nevertheless, many unions in the United States have developed excellent models of worker-centered education that promote worker empowerment and education for action. Hundreds of thousands of American workers receive training and education through their unions or through labor-management programs.[5] Many of these programs include some form of basic skills education along with occupational skill training and upgrading.

The funding source for workplace learning programs is a factor that influences the type of curriculum provided, the partners involved, and the instructional methodologies used. Federally funded programs often involve some kind of partnership between labor and management; and the balance of power in that partnership is determined by many factors, not the least of which is the strength of the union. Unions, state education agencies, or private foundations also fund programs that may or may not require management involvement. These programs often provide the most leeway in curriculum development and teaching methodology. However, the widespread involvement of management in many workplace learning programs can lead to conflicts between the educational objectives of management and those of the union.

These conflicts may be resolved in the good old union way—by negotiations. Negotiations can lead to compromises; for example, workers learn how to read and write the company's manuals and memos, but the union is free to include contract interpretation and labor history in the training as well. In other cases, management's assumption that basic skills education is neutral means that what goes on in a literacy class is below management's radar screen altogether.

Many workers who participate in basic and occupational skills training programs have little other contact with their unions. The large number of members in these programs creates an opportunity for unions interested in educating and developing leadership among their members. A popular education approach in these programs encourages participants to look critically at the issues they face in various aspects of their lives, whether at home, in the workplace, in the community, or in the union. This approach can show workers how these issues intersect with the role and activities of the union and can provide skills for union involvement.

Using popular education methodologies in the context of basic skills means combining an open-ended approach and preexisting objectives. Educators often have considerable leeway to select the methodology and, in many cases, the content as well. Just as in community-based literacy education, in popular education workers themselves can often select the content of reading, writing, and math activities. The classes create opportunities for posing and solving problems, building worker solidarity, activating union structures, creating group action projects, and building leadership. Furthermore, as workers improve their literacy and English language skills, key union communications such as political fliers, health and safety information, and benefit and contractual information become more accessible to these union members.

Training Contexts

A variety of contexts in which basic skills are taught to union members provide an opportunity for using popular education methodology.

Preparation for a High School Diploma

Many unions, along with labor-management training and education partnerships, offer programs to prepare workers to take the GED or the External Diploma Program (a competency-based high school diploma program). Taking the GED requires test taking, grammar and writing skills, the ability to analyze reading passages, and content area knowledge. Writing grievances, letters, petitions, and union newsletters are all examples of activities that can be incorporated into the class so students can practice for the writing portion of the test.

ESOL

Teaching English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) can open up communication among workers from different countries. Workers' rights and health and safety issues are often covered in these classes. These topics can be addressed in much the same way they are in classes organized directly for those purposes while workers simultaneously develop skills in English reading, writing, and oral communication.

Workplace Literacy

Literacy classes at the workplace can be job related or may merely use the workplace or union hall as the class location. Some programs use a skill-and-drill model, but others use a thematic approach conducive to popular education, which allows workers to pick a theme to explore or a project to work

Courtesy SEIU District 1199E-DC.

Workers from Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore celebrate graduation from their job-training program.

on. For example, after mapping where workers' families came from, a class of cafeteria workers who were members of the Food and Beverage Workers in Washington, D.C., chose to investigate the theme of the African diaspora in the Caribbean and the United States. They selected the topic in part because of conflicts between Latino, African American, and Caribbean workers. Their plan was to develop diversity training and raise consciousness among the workers in the cafeteria. Other examples of popular education in workplace literacy include workers' conducting oral histories, exploring labor history, and writing journals about work-related problems such as retirement, layoff, and women's issues.

Basic Skills Preparation

These classes teach English, computer, or other skills to prepare workers for further training in a specific occupation such as licensed practical nursing or building and construction trades. Because they are usually short term and are directly focused on an academic goal, they are more problematic for popular education. Nevertheless, even these programs provide opportunities to develop leadership and worker empowerment. Many of them include a study skills class in which participants identify barriers to academic performance and workplace success. Using focus groups, brainstorming, and visualization techniques, teachers can help workers identify not only their personal barriers but also the institutional ones they face at work, at home, and in the community.

Union-based classes are conducive to developing a collective response to the obstacles identified. Baby sitting cooperatives, study groups, and other collective solutions sometimes develop out of these problem solving classes. In one health care training program at SEIU District 1199E-DC in Baltimore, Maryland, workers identified an inflexible supervisor as a major barrier. She would not permit workers to make shift changes to accommodate class participation. The class discussed this problem with the union delegate and made a presentation to the joint labor-management training committee. The human resources department intervened with the supervisor, and the union delegate approached her as well. The successful resolution of the problem enhanced a sense of solidarity and was a win for both the class and the union.

Worker School Models

The Institute for Career Development (ICD) of the United Steelworkers of America and the steel industry have a national worker education program that includes hobby classes, literacy instruction, computer training, job preparation skills, and college courses. The workers participate in developing the courses and governing the program. ICD sponsors the Peer Learning Advocate program that recruits workers active in the education program to become advocates for education. They market the program to other workers and provide support and advocacy for those who participate. These advocates, who were mostly inactive in the union prior to participating in the educational program, have often moved up from the ranks of learners to become more active in union affairs as a whole. A number of them have become stewards and union officers.

Computer Classes

Basic computer classes often focus on discrete software skills. In union hands, even these classes provide an opportunity for action-oriented education. Facilitators can include material on ergonomics and can promote discussion and problem solving about the impact of technology on the changing workplace. These activities help workers understand the relationship between technology and power and potentially take action on these issues through their union.

Obstacles, Challenges, and Solutions

In the United States, the labor movement has had a mixed reaction to workplace learning and its role in building unions. Some visionary unions such as the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees (NUHHCE) District 1199C and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 285 integrate their workplace learning programs into union function and policy. Others, however, view basic skills education as a "nice" benefit with little significance for the union. Some union leaders see training and education as separate from organizing. But other leaders see the potential to strengthen union members' skills and promote their participation in the union. They also see that basic skills programs can serve as an incentive for new members.

Often, those of us involved with union-based workplace learning programs concentrate our efforts on convincing employers and public funders of our value to them while we neglect leaders and colleagues within our own unions. We have done little to document the value of training and education to the unions. In addition, we need to build capacity within the adult education system to develop more instructors and advocates who understand education for change and can implement it in a union setting.

Fortunately we have the example of our neighbors to the north who have done an excellent job integrating workplace learning, literacy education, and ESOL into the fabric of the union movement.

The following tasks would strengthen popular education in the American union setting and help build the union movement.

- Train the trainer. Finding instructors who understand both popular education and the union movement is a problem for most union-based programs. We need collective resources to "grow our own."
- Document success. A research project that documents how workplace learning builds unions would help union leaders understand this tremendous untapped resource.
- Open a curriculum clearinghouse. There are some great curricula out there. The problem is no one is collecting them. Many programs end up reinventing the wheel.
- Establish a network of popular educators in unions. Learning from each other's experience is one of the best ways to enhance the field.

The use of popular education in workplace learning programs is a powerful methodology to involve rank-and-file union members in many different action struggles. Around the United States, rank-and-file workers are becoming engaged in action research, collective problem posing and solving, organizing, building solidarity, health and safety, political action, worker advocacy, and many other union-building activities through union-based training and education. Just imagine what the U.S. union movement would be like if we could realize this potential.

I would like to extend a special thanks to my colleagues Tamara Levine of the Canadian Labour Congress and Harneen Chernow of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO for their valuable comments and suggestions on this paper.

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[1] *Basic skills*, also called foundation or essential skills, is the term usually used for literacy in the workplace and includes not only basic reading, writing, and math, but also problem solving, critical thinking, and sometimes basic computer skills. Basic skills may also include English language skills.

[2] This exercise was used in training sessions for basic skills and ESOL teachers in a labor-based program in Baltimore; in staff development for workplace literacy teachers sponsored by the Maryland State Department of Education; and in a workplace literacy course for instructors and program operators at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies.

[3] Elsa Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein, *ESL for Action: Problem Posing in the Workplace* (Baltimore: Addison Wesley, 1987).

[4] Canadian Labour Congress Workplace Literacy Project, *Learning Together, Solidarity at Work* 3 (winter 2001–2002): 1.

[5] The Consortium for Worker Education in New York City (a program that provides education and training to primarily union workers) alone enrolls more than 100,000 workers each year.

Courtesy Jenny Lee Utech.

English Classes at the Union Hall

By Jenny Lee Utech

The Context

In September of 1998, SEIU Local 285 in Massachusetts began offering ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes at its union hall. These classes, funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) and coordinated by Local 285's Worker Education Program, were the first English classes held at 285's union hall and the first to bring together union members from many worksites.[1] Up until this point, the Worker Education Program had secured funding for ESOL and literacy classes at individual worksites. Labor-management committees had overseen these classes; they met at the worksite and served only members from that site. By holding classes at the union hall, with SEIU Local 285 serving as the sponsor and providing matching resources for the DOE grant, the union and Worker Education Program (WEP) hoped to increase members' understanding of and participation in the union, and to build leadership among immigrant members.

SEIU Local 285 represents 12,500 workers in Massachusetts's health care and public sectors. The local is actively organizing nursing homes—all staffed by a largely immigrant workforce. These workers include many Haitians who work as certified nursing assistants and Latinos who work in the homes' kitchens and housekeeping departments. WEP and the union prioritized these members for student recruiting.

WEP teachers went onsite to talk to workers about the new classes, and dozens of workers from several nursing homes signed up. Our first union-based ESOL class began in September. With demand and interest from workers, and many members asking for morning classes or high school diploma classes, WEP applied for and received DOE funding for three more classes at the union hall —a morning ESOL class and two high school diploma classes that started in January 1999.[2]

This article describes a few key pieces of *participatory* curricula—based on the principles of popular education—that I developed as the ESOL teacher for classes offered between September 1998 and July 1999.

SEIU Local 285's Worker Education Program: A Freirian-based Approach to Education

Founded in 1991, The Worker Education Program, Inc., is a nonprofit education program that serves SEIU members throughout Massachusetts. WEP offices are based at SEIU Local 285's union hall. Over the years, WEP has accessed both public and private funds to develop labor-management education and training programs for workers. In 1995, WEP began offering ESOL and ABE (Adult Basic Education) classes on a large scale through a grant from the Federal Department of Education for workplace-based classes. When federal funding ended in 1997, the Massachusetts DOE began funding workplace education ESOL and ABE.

WEP's director and teachers believe that providing basic skills classes for members (ESOL, literacy, high school diploma) can build the union not only by giving workers concrete skills but by providing a forum for them to critically examine problems and their root causes, develop strategies, and take action as union members to address the problems. This approach to education and literacy, based on the principles of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, has become a cornerstone for WEP's ESOL and ABE curriculum development.

While many educators, activists, and organizers in the United States and Canada have taken inspiration from and adapted Freire's principles, Elsa Auerbach's work on Freirian-based ESOL and literacy for adults, which she and other adult literacy educators have called the "participatory approach," has been particularly relevant to WEP's curriculum goals. In *Making Meaning, Making Change*, a book documenting a group of teachers' explorations of and struggles with implementing the participatory approach, Auerbach describes this model of education as enabling learners "to become active participants in shaping their own realities. . . . Participants become the creators rather than the recipients of knowledge. They engage in a process of reflection and dialogue, developing both an understanding of the root causes of the problem and generating their own alternatives for addressing it. Literacy learning becomes a context for thinking critically about social issues in a process that Freire calls 'conscientization.'"[3] Literacy becomes a tool for addressing problems and taking collective action to make change.

In participatory classrooms, teachers often use pictures, readings, skits or small group activities as catalysts to generate discussions that uncover themes and issues. These activities may "problem-pose," or present a problem or issue similar to one students might be facing. As students discuss the problem and their experience with it, their own issues emerge. The teacher facilitates dialogue around these issues and problems to help the group define and analyze them, develop strategies, and plan collective action to address the problems. Reading, writing, speaking, and grammar work focus on giving students skills that will help them through this process.

Truly participatory classrooms are rare. Teachers and students often face institutional, logistical, and funding restraints that limit what any one group can accomplish. In WEP's worksite-based ESOL and ABE classes, for example, holding classes on-site has meant that supervisors were often close by, sometimes making students and teachers reluctant to talk about controversial or delicate work-related topics. The tensions and complexities of the labor-management context sometimes put a damper on critical analysis of workplace issues. Teachers have often had to sneak participatory class work in the back door and either present this work with a spin that management will accept or not even report participatory class work to management. Finally, participatory class work should ideally lead to collective action. But many times, workers have not wanted to take issues outside the classroom for fear of rocking the boat.

Having ESOL classes at the union hall for the first time meant that we had more freedom to talk openly about the union and how to address problems at work. We could build leadership skills and union participation as we were building workers' language skills and confidence. This was an exciting opportunity.

The Students

Most members in the morning and evening ESOL class worked at nursing homes, many as certified nursing assistants. Although many workers came from recently organized homes, members from several other workplaces participated as well. Some workers had helped lead the organizing drives at their worksites, while others knew little about the union. In both classes, most students were Haitian, but several Latino workers also participated as well as a few Russian and Indian workers. While almost all workers spoke some English and had been in the United States for years, language abilities varied. Workers' literacy levels varied even more widely. Some workers had had only five to six years of schooling, while some had completed high school or even university in their countries. Even though these were intermediate level classes, a few beginner level students enrolled and stuck it out. Although the first evening cycle in the fall started out with over twenty students, childcare problems, second jobs, and other obstacles paired down the class to twelve consistent students. Winter and spring classes typically had six to ten students attending at any given time.

The Goals

We started the year by brainstorming people's goals and reasons for coming to class. More than anything, members wanted to improve their English. They named writing, reading, spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar as areas they wanted to work on. They wanted to be able to express themselves well and speak with "more sophisticated words." While recruiting, we had pitched the classes as a chance to learn more English *and* learn about the union too, but even though some students had already been active in organizing drives or negotiations, no one brought up learning about the union during this initial brainstorm. I added it to our brainstorm list and we discussed what that might mean—having a space to ask questions about the union and learn how it works. We had also promised to teach basic computer skills along with everything else, and people were eager to learn these skills.

Courtesy Harneen Chernow.

An SEIU Local 285 member speaks for the striking nursing home workers.

For the union and WEP, one of these classes' main goals was to give people the opportunity to learn more about the union. We wanted the classroom to be a forum where workers could talk about what was going on with the union and ask questions. Ultimately we hoped that the classes would build leadership within the immigrant membership and increase participation and activism.

As the teacher of these new classes, I wanted to create union-centered, participatory lessons that would uncover students' issues and concerns and help us examine them together. I wanted us to explore these members' experiences and knowledge of their union, and issues they faced as union members. I hoped that class discussions would lead to members taking action to address issues raised in class. With several years of experience trying to incorporate Freirian-based work into ESOL curricula, I knew that I had to respect students' need for and interest in "traditional" language work, and I planned to include lots of reading, writing, and language practice in our class sessions. I also wanted to make time in every class for a little basic computer skills practice.

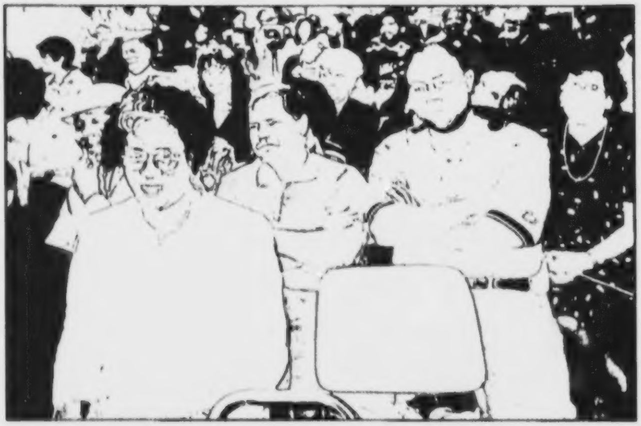
Snapshots of Union-Based Participatory Classroom Activities

Worker-to-Worker Interviews as Catalysts

Near the beginning of the first evening class cycle, as a way of uncovering possible union themes for future class work, I used worker-to-worker interviews to get students talking about their work and union. We had read a brief story about a nurse's aide first, which got people discussing their own work at nursing homes. I then asked people to brainstorm items to include in a questionnaire they would use to interview class members from other worksites. What would they like to know about their fellow classmates' working conditions, union chapter, supervisors, or problems at work? We generated a big list that included staffing issues, shift differentials, sick time and other benefits under the union contract, grievance procedures, and union meetings. Students worked in small groups to write out questions for each item (this provided language work and made the questionnaire student-designed). The finished questionnaire included many basic questions about job descriptions, pay, and benefits; for example, "How many sick days do you get?" and "Do you have medical/dental insurance? What kind? How much does it cost?" Other questions addressed worker-management relations; for example, "How does your supervisor treat you?" Questions about the union included, "Do you get enough information from union meetings?" and "How strong is the union at your workplace?"

In pairs, workers interviewed classmates from other worksites. We spent the next class session compiling this information onto big wall charts and comparing the different worksites and contracts. During these comparisons, issues about lack of contact with the union and uncertainties about contract content surfaced. These discussions led us to further class work and dialogue about members' contracts and participation in the union.

Excerpts from Studs Terkel's Working *as catalysts*: In the morning class, fluctuating attendance at the beginning of the cycle kept us from completing worker-to-worker interviews. Instead, I selected a few paragraphs from three interviews in Studs Terkel's book *Working*.[4] I hoped they would serve as catalysts and bring work and union issues to the surface. One excerpt, from Terkel's interview with hospital worker Kitty Scanlan, touches on the power hierarchy at her workplace: "If you buy into . . . the system, you buy the idea that 'I'm not quite as good as the guy above me.' The resident doesn't strike


Courtesy Jenny Lee Utech.

Students, their families, and union staff gather to celebrate the publication of *Working Writers III*, 1999.

back at the attending man when he has a bad day. He strikes out at the nurse. The nurse strikes out at the hospital aide or cleaning lady." Workers reacted immediately to this piece and discussion was intense.

To lead discussion, I had prepared questions aimed at getting to the issue of power and hierarchy at the workplace: At your workplace, who is on the top? Who is on the bottom? In the middle? Workers eagerly described the power structures they had to deal with at work. Then I asked them to draw or list these structures in small groups. When they were finished, each group (one group per worksite) then posted and shared its structures. I then asked, what do people at the bottom have? Why? What do people at the top have? Why? Responses came hotly and quickly. Those at the top, workers said, have higher pay, better benefits, control, power to decide things, power to make rules, and flexible schedules. Those at the bottom, workers said, have lower pay, too much work, rigid schedules, very little control over schedules or workloads, and no power. After "no power" went up on the list, one worker spoke up and said, "But we have power with the union." Others agreed, and we listed how union power might be exercised—through grievance procedures, contract negotiations, and even strikes. This dialogue and analysis of power at work opened the door to discussing and acting on more specific union information.

"Speak Up For Your Rights"—worker writing as a problem-poser. After catalyst activities had brought out some of the workers' questions about the union, I wanted us to examine further what it meant to be a union member, where these rights came from, and how members could take action within their unions. To start this off, I asked workers to read "Speak Up for Your Rights," a story written by a former WEP student/union member and published in the second volume of WEP's annual student publication *Working Writers.*[5] In this piece, the author Joan Canty describes her first job where she worked as a nurse's aide at Massachusetts General Hospital in 1959. She recounts the bad treatment she

received that led her to quit the job six months after she started. At the end of her story, Canty writes, "I learned to be aggressive and speak up for my rights." Reading this piece sparked an animated discussion. We talked about what the author might have done differently and what she could have done if she had had a union at that job. A few workers shared stories of times when they had spoken up for their rights. We listed what rights people had at work and how they got them—through the union contract, or state and federal law.

Workers' Rights Quiz

We followed this discussion with a "Workers' Rights Quiz" I had prepared that asked students to answer "yes" or "no" to statements like "Workers have the right to vacation with pay" and "The employer has the right to cut workers' pay at any time." Students answered first for all workers, union and nonunion, and then for their own union contracts. We went over answers together by sticking "Yes" or "No" Post-Its on a large newsprint version of the quiz. These workers, some of whom had worked in union jobs for years, were surprised to learn that state and federal laws guarantee workers very few rights. Their union contracts guaranteed many more. Discussing the quiz brought up more questions about union contracts and rights and led us to examine members' contracts in more detail.

Reading the Union Contract and Taking Action

To help us look at contracts in more detail, I designed two activity sheets for the union contract from the nursing home where the majority of students worked. The first activity sheet required workers to skim the table of contents and locate contract articles and page numbers where they could find information on health insurance, grievance procedures, overtime, seniority, etc. The second required people to look up specific contract articles and locate specific information. As students read through the contract articles, we listed vocabulary that members had questions about and we defined the words together. Students loved this opportunity to examine a contract and be able to ask questions about it. I asked all the students to bring in their own union contracts for the following class session.

During the next class, using workers' questions from previous classes we identified specific contract articles that people wanted to discuss in more detail, including articles about just cause, the rights of members to have a steward present during disciplinary meetings, and overtime rules. Students worked in pairs to find this information in their own contracts and compare it with their partners' contracts. In the morning class, as we shared information, some problems at one nursing home came up. It appeared that a supervisor was violating overtime agreements. We agreed to invite the union representative to class to discuss this problem further. During the representative's visit, members asked her specific questions about that worksite and others. We brainstormed how workers at the site could respond to the supervisor and address the overtime violations. We came up with a plan: students would speak with their union steward and explain the problem. Then they would go together with the steward to speak to the supervisor. We practiced explaining the problem. The following week, these students went with the union steward to the supervisor and resolved the overtime problem. The contract work also prompted other class members to contact their stewards about particular questions and concerns.[6] These students had turned education into action.

Challenges and Successes

In this article, I have written about a few specific participatory activities that generated a lot of discussion about working conditions and the union. As issues surfaced during these activities, we examined them in more detail and turned to the union contract for some answers. We took action by inviting the union representative to class and brainstorming strategies for a particular problem. In the case of workers at one site, class work led to their acting with their union steward to resolve a contract violation.

Challenges

Along with these exciting achievements, we had many challenges. Classes at the union hall were free from some of the restraints and problems common in labor-management classes based at the worksite; for example, managers and supervisors not releasing workers for class, objecting to union content or to workplace problem-posing in the classroom, imposing a "fix-the-worker" agenda on classes, or popping in during classes to see what workers are doing. But these classes had their own challenges. Some were typical of any adult education program. People had problems with childcare and transportation. Attendance fluctuated as a result, and this affected what we could accomplish. Follow-up to a great discussion might be put on hold, sometimes until the momentum was gone, because several students would miss classes. Trying to integrate participatory activities with meaningful reading, writing, and grammar work and basic computer skills meant lots of juggling and some dropped balls. Students' varying literacy levels meant spending lots of time preparing different levels of activities so everyone could participate, and losing some students because they felt the class was too easy or too hard.

Other challenges were particular to our union setting. The union was eager to support the classes and paid a percentage of the teacher's salary as cash match for the grant. But while the local wanted to build an active membership and diverse leadership and saw the ESOL-ABE classes as helping to accomplish that, union staff faced the competing demands of representing thousands of workers with over 140 contracts around the state. Union representatives were often overworked and busy with much more pressing issues than meeting students or talking with the teacher about what members could learn about the union. Having workers from many worksites meant that we were dealing with many different problems, many contracts, and both strong and weak chapters. Some members could use their new confidence and knowledge about the union more easily, while others faced chapters without active stewards, regular meetings, or a responsive union representative. During class discussions, members sometimes complained about union representatives or their contract. At times it was difficult to distinguish real problems from gripes or personality conflicts, or to know what to do with such information. Lastly, while I sometimes felt that we weren't doing enough union-related participatory work in class, students sometimes felt we were doing too much. Although the class developed some new leaders, other students—who had signed up for English classes, not "Union 101"—were not interested in becoming more active and attended mostly for the language practice the class gave them.

Courtesy Jenny Lee Utech.

A member of SEIU Local 285's ESOL classes speaks at the end of year ceremony.

Successes

Discussing rights under the union contract, discovering a contract violation at one worksite, and taking action to solve it, were concrete and satisfying successes. Our discussions also encouraged some students to become more active in the union. Two students became stewards, two signed up for 285's Leaders in Training program, and four attended the Women's Institute for Leadership Development.[7] A few other students joined their negotiating committees. Other workers simply felt more confident about communicating with their stewards or fellow union members, or attending union meetings. The class provided lots of vocabulary, writing, and reading practice, which built workers' confidence and skills. For almost all of these workers, the class was the first opportunity they had to meet members from other worksites and share experiences and strategies. For many, it was the first time they had come to the union hall.

In addition to the activities described above, throughout the year I used readings from sources including *The New Field Guide to the U.S. Economy* and the *Boston Globe* to get us talking about basic economics literacy and low-wage work in the United States.[8] We also did a unit on speaking in public. We practiced speaking at union meetings and convincing coworkers to come to a union meeting or participate in union contract negotiations. Although most of this class work did not lead to specific actions like the contract work did, it gave members opportunities to ask questions and to discuss, share, and analyze issues together.

A Few Observations

Holding participatory ESOL classes at the union hall does not guarantee leadership development or more active members. At WEP, experienced teachers familiar with the union have taught the union-based classes. But this is not always the case in union-based education programs. Teachers of such classes must connect with the union, become familiar with the local's work and priorities, have access to union representatives and leaders, and have a proworker, pro-union stance. SEIU Local 285's interest and support got the ESOL classes going, and 285 union representatives helped teachers get access to nursing homes for student recruiting. But to foster long-term involvement and activism among members in classes, union representatives and leaders need regular contact with students, and they should have a say in curriculum focus and priorities. And the union must have structures that workers in ESOL and ABE classes—who are often the most marginalized members in the union—can plug into. Since the first year of ESOL classes, WEP and the union have tried to integrate classes more with the local's work. The challenges of teaching ESOL with a participatory curriculum that fosters union action and activism continue, and so do the rewards. In a recent interview, Local 285's Healthcare Division director spoke about the focus and potential of education programs for union members: "The pieces of the local—organizing, representation, education—need to be integrated. . . . Training and education are valuable in and of themselves. But they should also be about building the union and strengthening workers' power. Our classes should be different, not just provide training that employers could do on their own. That's the great thing about folks coming here to the union hall. It's a great opportunity. In these classes, we need to convey that here are the members who are part of making the organization, the union, strong—that this is the way to have a better life."[9]

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[1] Funding came from the Massachusetts Department of Education's Adult and Community Learning Services workplace education line item, which has funded workplace education programs (ABE, ESOL, and some computer skills) at worksites around the state. Employers must provide 50 percent release time to workers attending classes, or some kind of match, e.g., completion bonuses. Several workplace education programs funded by the DOE are labor-management programs with unions playing a key role in program design and implementation.

[2] Harneen Chernow, WEP Director from 1991 to 1998, and members of the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable were instrumental in helping the DOE to create a union-aware grant-making process for workplace education funding. Until 1998, workplace education programs needed an employer partner to receive funding. SEIU Local 285's Worker Education Program was the first to secure funding for a program with a union as the partner, providing the match for the grant. DOE match requirements were also modified for unions and small businesses, which are usually unable to provide the level of match that a large employer could afford.

[3] Elsa Roberts Auerbach, *Making Meaning, Making Change* (McHenry, Ill.: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems, 1992); and its companion volume, Andrea Nash et al., *Talking Shop* (McHenry, Ill.: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems, 1992). These books provide in-depth discussion and documentation of creating participatory curricula in ESOL classes and are valuable resources for teachers and union education programs.

[4] Studs Terkel, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (New York: New Press, 1997).

[5] The Worker Education Program has published five volumes of *Working Writers: A Literary Collection by the Students of the Worker Education Program.* Publication costs have been partially supported by the Massachusetts DOE, SEIU Local 285's staff union, and other contributors. For more information or to obtain copies of *Working Writers*, contact the Worker Education Program, c/o SEIU Local 285, tel. (617) 442-4100.

[6] For non-native speakers of English (as well as many native speakers) a union contract—written in technical, legal language—is very difficult to read. By selecting certain key sections, working on vocabulary, and creating a lot of time for discussion, questions, and strategizing, I hoped to demystify the contract and get members thinking about how to approach it (by looking through it, by contacting a steward, by discussing it with other members, etc.). The goal was not to decode the contract by looking up every word in the dictionary but rather to look at how members can handle questions about their union contract.

[7] The Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) is a nonprofit, grant-funded organization whose goal is to help women develop as effective leaders in their unions and communities. WILD holds biannual weekend institutes for women in unions across Massachusetts and bases its workshops and structure on the principles of popular education. For more information, go to http://www.wildlabor.org.

[8] James Heintz, Nancy Folbre, and the Center for Popular Economics, *The New Field Guide to the U.S. Economy: A Compact and Irreverent Guide to Economic Life in America* (New York: New Press, 1995). This book contains simple one-page explanations of the U.S. economy's recent trends and inequalities, accompanied by basic graphs. It is an excellent resource for teaching economic literacy.

[9] Mike Fadel, telephone interview with author, Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable, Boston, October 24, 2001.

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Courtesy Neal Sacharow.

Labor in the Schools: Collective Bargaining Education Project

By Linda Tubach

The tension was building at the bargaining table.

"I can't understand this," said Veronica. "The company's made you a very generous offer, and all you can say is . . . "

Chris, the union's spokesperson on wages, cut her off. "Understanding? You're not respecting us. We're the ones making this company rich. We do the work. Either you satisfy us now or we go on strike!"

Suddenly the entire union team stood up and stormed out of the high school lunchroom, stunning the management team.

"Now what should we do?" asked Shawn.

By the end of the collective bargaining simulation, one hundred high school seniors in Mr. Bromley's economics classes had answered this question in a variety of ways, and they were eager to discuss what they had learned from the experience. Several common themes emerged as the students reflected on the weeklong role-play conducted through the Collective Bargaining Education Project in the Los Angeles Unified School District.

"Without a union," Mario said, "there is no bargaining in the workplace. You have to take what management gives you."

"Every person has the power to make a difference, especially working together as a group," Sandra added.

Courtesy Barbara Lynch

A role-play of the 1934 Longshore strike.

Dozens of students agreed with Tony who said, "It was wonderful—every class should be taught this way. And every student should take this class so they can understand the need for unions and have better opportunities."

Using popular education techniques, the Collective Bargaining Education Project is bringing the labor movement to life in Los Angeles classrooms. Fellow social studies teacher Patty Litwin and I have compiled a six-part curriculum to engage students and their teachers in the past, present, and future of labor-management relations.[1] In addition to the collective bargaining simulation, the curriculum now includes: role-plays of the Homestead Strike of 1892 and the 1934 West Coast Longshore Strike from *The Power in Our Hands* by Bill Bigelow and Norm Diamond;[2] a simulation of a contemporary union organizing campaign and union election; a workshop on labor law and workplace rights; and a case study on globalization and child labor in the garment industry from the Resource Center of the Americas.[3]

Every week, Patty and I visit a different high school; we are invited by social studies teachers to work directly with students in their classrooms. Each lesson lasts a week or more and features background reading, preparation in small groups, and negotiations and/or "community meetings" to consider different points of view and make important decisions about labor relations. The collective bargaining simulation includes professionals from both the labor and management sides of the table who volunteer to mentor the students on bargaining day. On the final day, the students reflect on what they have learned through group discussions and analytical writing assignments. These reflections explore the issues of power, equity, and dignity in the workplace from multiple perspectives. The results are not predetermined; instead, students experience the world of work, labor-management conflict, and public policy as a range of possibilities. They create the outcomes themselves.

Our program is unique in two respects. It is the only full-time labor education program for high school students in the country, thanks to ongoing support from our local labor movement; and its success is based on the power of popular education techniques in the classroom.

Why Do We Use Popular Education Methods to Teach about Social Justice and the Labor Movement?

After my first year of teaching high school economics and U.S. history, I knew I had to do something differently. More than half my students had failed my classes. My social justice themes seemed compelling to me, but my lectures were clearly boring to many students whose attention drifted elsewhere; more and more students became disruptive as the months of lectures, notes, chapter assignments, and tests wore on. My mentor teachers gave me some memory games, like "Jeopardy," to ignite greater student interest in my lessons. But the excitement of competition wore off quickly, and the games seemed to deepen the inequities that had already emerged in my classroom—differences between the students who succeeded on my multiple choice tests and those who failed, between those who did their homework and those who didn't, between the cooperative and the disruptive students, and, disturbingly, differences along gender and race lines, too. In fact, I was reproducing the very hierarchies I wanted my students to learn to challenge in their workplaces and communities.

For guidance, I turned to some members of a collective I had joined in college called "Praxis," which had attempted to implement Paulo Friere's ideas in our teacher preparation program. Bill Bigelow, a Portland, Oregon, social studies teacher and editor for Rethinking Schools, sent me a lesson plan for a role-play of the 1934 West Coast Longshore Workers strike that he had created with Norm Diamond, our former professor.[4] As the lesson unfolded in my classroom, students who had been unresponsive to lectures, memorizing facts for tests, and textbook assignments suddenly came to life.

In this simulation, students directly experience the choices the actual strike participants faced. As they interact in five different social groups, students develop their points of view, negotiate with each other, and propose solutions to the strike. They decide whether the governor should call in the National Guard to re-open the port and protect strikebreakers, and what action they

Courtesy Linda Tubach.

Linda Tubach listens to Chatsworth High School students' role-play of the 1934 Longshore strike.

will take if he does. I was astounded by my students' mastery of the information and their ability to create and evaluate possible resolutions to the labor conflict.

In an article for *Rethinking Our Classrooms*, Bill explains: "As Paulo Freire says, 'Conflict is the midwife of consciousness,' and the simulated conflict in role-plays like this allows students to reflect on much larger issues: When are alliances between different social groups possible? What role should the government play in labor disputes? Can people unite for worthy goals? [These are] big and tough questions, but because they draw on an experience every student helped create, they are concrete rather than abstract. Regardless of past academic achievement, the activities and discussion challenge every student."[5]

Results for High School Students

Students often tell us that both the process and content of the lessons in our labor education curriculum have had a deep impact on them. Why? As Bill puts it, "Role-plays show, don't tell."[6] The students learn by doing, by using ideas and information to make important decisions and solve meaningful problems. Both education research and our own practical experience in the classroom have demonstrated that the role-play is the most powerful learning strategy. "Not only is it fun," one student told us, "but I really learned something and I feel that I had a part in learning, instead of someone just telling me." Many students report that these lessons are the best learning experience they have had in high school.

The content of the curriculum is highly relevant to the students' experience and to their futures, another vital element in effective learning. Recent research on the learning process shows that people best retain ideas and information that will be useful for survival.[7] Most of the students we work with are from working-class communities. They are often familiar with aspects of their parents' work. Many work part-time themselves, usually in low-wage jobs. By engaging in role-plays, students are able to consider multiple points of view on how to achieve a better workplace, and learn firsthand about the benefits of unionizing and collective action in our workplaces and communities. They learn that the choices they each make as individuals and in groups make a difference. At the end of each class, dozens of students sign up for more information about careers in the labor movement, labor studies programs, and internship opportunities. Some of our students have gone on to become labor organizers (and social studies teachers!) themselves.

Results for Teachers and Union Coaches

After several years of working in classrooms all over the Los Angeles Unified School District, we have improved both the content and the structure of the curriculum, adding, for example, exercises to examine current labor law. And thanks to constant practice and feedback from students and teachers, we have devised ways to ensure greater participation and to enlarge the scope of ideas for debate and discussion. We have found that whether we're working with students identified as highly gifted, or with students at an "underperforming" inner city school, students' response is qualitatively the same.

Courtesy Linda Tubach

A role-play of the 1934 Longshore strike.

The lessons also have a considerable impact on the teachers who invite us into their classrooms to demonstrate them. They are often very moved by the leadership and critical thinking qualities their students exhibit and are introduced to the benefits of popular education pedagogy. "I've never seen my students focus so intently on any previous project," one teacher told us. "Students learned the value of negotiation from a position of strength. They saw the importance of working together for a common goal, compromising when necessary, and unionizing to gain power." Many said, "It's the best activity we've had all year!"

The successful demonstration lesson helps to improve teachers' respect and expectations for their students, and often provides an incentive to revise their teaching practice. We get a lot of requests for additional role-play curricula to address other social studies subjects. Teachers have also been motivated to become more involved themselves as rank-and-file union members, to achieve the union's goals at school and in public policy.

The union staff and leaders who serve as coaches for the students' collective bargaining teams have also expressed enthusiasm for the program. They frequently volunteer over and over again, and our volunteer pool grows every year as coaches invite their peers to join them in educating and organizing youth. For many coaches, this is a rare opportunity to interact with young people and to learn about their hopes and aspirations.

Conclusion

High school students are the new frontier for labor organizing, and popular education is a vital way to involve them. Through a learning process that involves direct experience around relevant issues, young people can begin to understand the sources of conflict in the workplace and explore possible resolutions. Our program exposes students to labor history and to contemporary bargaining and organizing practices, which ultimately encourages them to participate in unions and in organizing at their workplaces. The rich experience also awakens adults involved, as classroom teachers are inspired to change their teaching practice and become more involved in their own unions. Activists from other local unions have the opportunity to coach students, and in effect to "organize" our emerging labor force. In short, popular education in the classroom setting has the potential to revitalize not only the labor movement but education itself.

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[1] The six-part curriculum, *Workplace Issues and Collective Bargaining in the Classroom*, is available at the Collective Bargaining Education Project, (213) 386-3144, or send e-mail to cbep@lausd.k12.ca.us.

[2] William Bigelow and Norman Diamond, *The Power in Our Hands: A Curriculum on the History of Work and Workers in the United States* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988). See website at http://www.teachingforchange.org.

[3] The Resource Center of the Americas is based in Minnesota. It develops education programs, organizes antisweatshop campaigns, and provides educational resources. See website at http://www.americas.org.

[4] Founded in 1986 by activist teachers, Rethinking Schools is a nonprofit, independent publisher of educational materials, including a quarterly journal as well as other books and booklets. Rethinking Schools' materials advocate the reform of elementary and secondary education, with a strong emphasis on issues of equity and social justice. See website at http://www.rethinkingschools.org.

[5] Bill Bigelow, "Getting Off the Track," *Rethinking Our Classrooms* 7, no. 4 (summer 1993).

[6] Bill Bigelow, "Role Plays: Show, Don't Tell," *Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice*, ed. Bill Bigelow et al. (Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools, 1994), 114–15.

[7] Eric Jensen, *Completing the Puzzle: the Brain-Compatible Approach to Learning* (Del Mar, Calif.: Brain Store, 1996).

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Labor Deserves Credit: The Popular Education Foundations of the National Labor College

By Susan J. Schurman

The purpose of this essay is to describe the popular education roots of the National Labor College. Because popular education has been associated almost exclusively with nonformal education, its application to formal degree-based study has been neglected.[1] Indeed there are some who insist that degree-based education cannot, by definition, be popular education. Historically it is hard to argue with this view. Popular education clearly developed in opposition to state-sanctioned formal education systems, which controlled pathways to power and privilege by limiting access to educational credentials. In the United States, as many writers have pointed out, ideologies for restricting access to formal postsecondary education based on such modern constructs as intelligence quotient (IQ) or test scores have been the principal means of concealing the facts of inequality beneath the rhetoric of equality.[2] As John Hurst makes clear in his essay in this volume, popular education in the United States emerged specifically to help workers, minorities, and other oppressed groups acquire the kind of analytic skills to act in their own interest that members of elite groups obtain through formal education. Indeed virtually all forms of nonformal education have their roots in opposition to, or in compensation for, exclusion from the formal education system. Given this history, it should come as no surprise that an ideology has evolved asserting that the nonformal status of popular education is critical to its emancipatory role.

In this essay I want to take issue with this claim. I want to argue instead that there is no inherent reason—apart from political power—that popular education methodology cannot serve as the foundation for formal workers' or labor education. Indeed, if one reads Paulo Freire's work carefully, it is clear that his method was specifically designed to introduce illiterate people to the analytic processes associated with social research from both the Marxist and Western liberal traditions. As

Elaine Bernard and others rightly point out elsewhere in this volume, neither popular education nor labor education is ideologically neutral. But nor is business education, economics, or even medicine. The difference is that the power of business and the medical profession to insert their point of view into the academic curriculum has grown in recent years while the power of labor education's traditional constituencies has weakened.[3] As a consequence, after gaining a toehold in the academy during the second half of the twentieth century, academic labor education programs have faced continuing pressure to adopt a more "neutral" or "objective" stance—which basically means to "stop teaching that class warfare stuff." Business schools, however, can openly teach "union avoidance" in their classrooms as a matter of sound business policy, despite the fact that employees' right to form or join unions is still the law of the land. Meanwhile, beneath the smokescreen generated by conservative academics such as Alan Bloom and E.D. Hirsch Jr.[4]—who have been loudly screeching about the takeover of the academy by the "leftist professoriate"[5]—the disappearance over the past two decades of *social class* as a legitimate and important subject of study in the academy has been nothing short of spectacular.[6]

I also want to assert, again echoing Bernard, that to argue for popular education as the basis of formal degree-based instruction requires a focus on its content as well as its form. In my opinion, much of what has passed for popular education in the United States fails to meet the test of content. I would rephrase Bernard's definition slightly for purposes of analysis: the core content of popular education (1) begins with recognizing and respecting people's own practical knowledge, gained through experience; (2) adds the core skills of theoretical analysis and expression to validly understand and describe their own social, economic, and cultural condition in relation to other social actors; and (3) aims to empower them with the personal and collective efficacy to design actions that will enable them to advance their interests in a pluralistic society. The second and third elements of this definition fall squarely within the historic mission of formal higher education—albeit mostly for the upper classes. The first element, the role of experience, is a point of intense political conflict.

To reconcile formal and nonformal or informal education requires the incorporation of experiential learning in the formal

Courtesy GMC-NLC

National Labor College students work in small group.

educational process. The National Labor College is intentionally constructed to incorporate all three of these essential elements of popular education into its curriculum and pedagogy. In the sections that follow I will try to describe how this has been accomplished.

The Politics of Experience: Whose Gets Valued?

The question of whose experience gets valued in the formal educational curriculum lies at the heart of political contesting in all societies. Pipan defines curriculum as "the cultural environment which has been selected as a set of possibilities for learning transactions."[7] This definition calls attention to the fact that the cultural environment always contains multiple options for knowledge construction and transmission through the education process. The ways in which political interests are embedded in the curriculum can be examined through four basic questions:

1. Which aspects of cultural practice have been selected?
2. Who has the power to decide what is learned and by whom?
3. What is the specific character of the teaching-learning (pedagogic) practices?
4. What opportunities or prohibitions for action are implied in the learning process?

John Dewey, arguably one of the greatest U.S. philosophers, summarized the matter by pointing out that a system of education is the practical application of political philosophy. In the United States the contest over curriculum does not follow simple partisan lines. In general, liberals and progressives advocate the incorporation of personal experience in the learning process while conservatives insist that the curriculum rest on selected experience from the past culled into a canon.[8] Indeed, the insistence on the relevance of contemporary individual experience—in addition to or in place of the canon—is the hallmark of educational progressivism. However, many populists of all stripes want to throw out the whole formal education system, and attempts to do so (such as the home schooling movement) cut across the political spectrum.

It all boils down to a power struggle over who gets to decide the content of the curriculum. Even many progressives who otherwise advocate the inclusion of experiential learning in the formal education process nevertheless want to confine to professionals the selection of which types of experience get counted rather than allowing learners to participate. While this may be appropriate for elementary or secondary education where learners lack both basic life experiences and the skills to process them, it poses serious problems in the context of adult worker and trade union leadership education, for two primary reasons: First, adult learners possess rich experiential learning histories that contain what educational psychologists call the "basic empirical referents" to which all abstract concepts and theories refer. Indeed much of the formal learning process is really about discovering the power of theoretical knowledge to connect these basic referents in new ways to reveal new understandings.[9] Second, excluding the learners' experience deprives the teacher of a rich source of learning transactions on which to construct both the content as well as the instructional approach to the course.

Philosopher Gilbert Rile distinguished between practical knowledge (know how) and theoretical knowledge (know why).[10] The former has always been the province of working people—the laboring classes, the latter owned by elites. The historical task of worker's education has been twofold: first to obtain recognition for the value of workers' practical knowledge, then to supply the theoretical tools that will enable workers to act more effectively in their own interests. In *Education for Critical Consciousness,* Paulo Freire clearly states that the goal of popular education is to develop critical consciousness by connecting theoretical and practical knowledge:

> Critics of the Brazilian taste for verbosity have customarily accused our education of being "theoretical" mistakenly equating theory with verbalism. On the contrary, we lacked theory—a theory of intervention with reality, the analytical contact with existence which enables one to substantiate and to experience that existence fully and completely. In this sense theorizing is contemplation (although not in the erroneous connotation of abstraction or opposition to reality). Our education was not theoretical, precisely because it lacked this bent toward substantiation, toward invention, toward research.
>
> Our traditional curriculum, disconnected from life, centered on words emptied of the reality they are meant to represent, lacking in concrete activity, could never develop a critical consciousness. Indeed, its own naïve dependence on high sounding phrases, reliance on rote, and tendency toward abstractedness actually intensifies our naïveté.[11]

Freire uses the term *praxis* to connote the explicit link between theoretical and practical knowledge in the development of effective action/change plans. *Praxis* is a Greek word that refers to action that is consciously aimed. It has come to represent an approach to social change in which interventions are grounded in the best available theories and theories are amended based on the careful evaluation of the results of interventions.

As Freire's work demonstrated, it is entirely possible—and urgently necessary—to develop a system of nonformal education to develop critical consciousness. But I doubt very much that he would have turned down the opportunity to embed his educational praxis inside the Brazilian formal education system if it were offered.

I believe that in the United States the next important democratic project of workers' and labor education is to advance the formal higher education opportunities for workers and trade union leaders. But this cannot mean simply using organized labor's leverage to create better access to colleges and universities for working men and women. This in fact was accomplished long ago with the advent of the community college. However, as Brint and Krabel's recent study of the community college system makes clear, access to the institutions of higher learning does not mean access to the kind of instruction that leads to critical consciousness.[12] This will not be accomplished without the incorporation of the philosophy and pedagogy of critical consciousness into the formal system. Such a project cannot be imposed from outside but must be solidly anchored within U.S. trade union institutions. Again to echo Elaine Bernard, very few unions encourage or promote the exercise of critical consciousness by their members.

Union culture in the United States is based on strict notions of internal solidarity as the basis of collective power. Dissent is viewed as a threat to solidarity and therefore a threat to collective power. Such a culture makes it very difficult for unions to develop processes of critical reflection on their own practice. However, such processes are vitally important during periods of dramatic economic change as unions seek to make the kind of changes required of them if they are to succeed in attracting more workers to the labor movement. To succeed, such a process of collective reflection and learning must be firmly controlled by workers and their unions. Outside experts and institutions can and must play an important role, but workers themselves and their representatives must initiate the process and shape the curriculum. Therein lies the central premise of the dialogic method in Freire's work. Dialogue is the method through which the concept of praxis is enacted.

> Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education. Education which is able to resolve the contradiction between teacher and student takes place in a situation in which both address their act of cognition to the object by which they are mediated. Thus, the dialogical character of education as the practice of freedom does not begin when the teacher-student meets with the students-teacher in a pedagogical situation, but rather when the former first asks himself [sic] what he will dialogue with the latter about. And preoccupation with the content of dialogue is really preoccupation with the program content of education.
>
> . . . For the dialogical, problem-posing teacher-student, the program content of education is neither a gift nor an imposition—bits of information to be deposited in the students—but rather the organized, systematized, and developed "re-presentation" to individuals of the things about which ***they want to know more*** [emphasis added].[13]

The dialogic method as Freire describes it is anathema to the traditional higher education institution, which relies primarily on what Freire termed the "banking" method of instruction: expert teachers depositing bits of information into the empty heads of students. Ironically the techniques of

Courtesy GMC-NLC

Small group activity.

learner-centeredness associated with popular education are being adopted by business schools rather than by liberal arts colleges (though business schools would describe their practice as "customer-focused").[14]

Recently the U.S. labor movement established its own college, the National Labor College. The Labor College is explicitly structured to try to create a synthesis between the principles and practice of popular education and the best liberal arts traditions of the academy.

Creating the National Labor College: Building on Labor's Experience

Though seldom recognized as such, organized labor in the United States constitutes one of the largest networks of postsecondary education in the country. Unions design and deliver trade union leadership education, bargain with employers for continuing worker education and training (often by creating tuition reimbursement clauses in collective bargaining agreements), cooperate with employers in delivering certified training such as apprenticeships or diploma nurse programs, and lobby for public funds to provide education and training to both incumbent and dislocated workers. Unions are also the largest political lobby supporting public education in the United States. For the most part, however, union-sponsored training and education is nonformal and occupation or industry specific. Therefore, despite the high quality of much of this education, it is neither portable nor transferable. As a result, when a worker's employment relationship is severed, both the worker and the union lose their investment in education. The worker frequently cannot even obtain recognition for training from a different employer in the same industry.

Many solutions to this problem have been proposed, most notably a national "skills standards" task force sought to develop a standardized approach to describing and documenting occupational skills to facilitate transferability and portability.[15] Union-registered apprenticeships provide a clear and effective model for such a system: a journey level plumber in New Jersey has pretty much the same training as a plumber in California. While creating national skills standards is an important and worthy enterprise, it does not go far enough. The standard college credit system provides the best means of converting work-based and union-based education and training into recognized credentials that are both portable and transferable. This is because the college credit system is based on the concept of generalizability, that is, knowledge that can be transferred to settings other than the one where it was acquired. Indeed, the essence of college-level learning is not the subject matter taught but the ability to define and solve novel problems in novel settings. Importantly, over the past half-century, a systematic methodology has been developed for assessing the college credit equivalence of work-based and life-based learning. It is this system that forms the foundation of the National Labor College.

Background on the College

In 1969 the executive council of the AFL-CIO established the AFL-CIO Labor Studies Center. In 1974 the center moved to its present campus, a former Xavierian seminary in Silver Spring, Maryland, just north of Washington, D.C., and was renamed the George Meany Center for Labor Studies. From the beginning, the center was modeled on other residential educational centers both in the United States and Western Europe.

In 1974 Antioch University, which at its founding in 1853 had pioneered the "co-op" plan in which students alternated study with full-time work, opened a branch campus in Maryland. As part of Antioch Maryland, the George Meany Center entered into a partnership to offer a B.A. degree in labor studies. Under the leadership of Morris Keaton, provost of Antioch Maryland, a unique non-traditional baccalaureate degree for trade union leaders and staff was developed.

This was in the pioneering days of distance learning. The Antioch-Meany Center program was licensed as a "low-residence, upper-division, degree-completion" institution. Students were required to have forty-five quarter-hour college credits to be admitted. The "low-residence" format required that, after matriculation, students travel to the campus for a week of instruction from the professors (seven and a half contact hours per course); upon returning home they would complete a series of written assignments and mail them to the instructor. When they returned to campus the following semester they would attend a final session of the course and then begin their next semester. One hundred and eighty quarter-hour credits were required for graduation. Of these only twenty could be obtained through assessment of prior learning. Another twenty were earned through final senior papers that described how the students had applied the learning gained from their courses on their jobs. Over the nearly twenty years of the Antioch program, 1,552 students matriculated and 340 successfully completed the coursework to earn their B.A. degrees. The Antioch program attracted students primarily from the ranks of union staff and officers, especially from large local and national unions.

In 1995 the Meany Center board voted to explore the idea of seeking independent accreditation for the B.A. program. In early 1997, as part of the development of a five-year strategic plan for Meany Center programs, I encouraged the board to implement this action. In late 1997 our proposal to operate independently as the National Labor College was approved by the Maryland Higher Education Commission. We immediately applied for regional accreditation by the Middle States Association of Universities and Colleges and were granted candidacy status in mid-1999. In the course of our candidacy, the board of trustees decided to change the articles of incorporation and bylaws to clarify that the George Meany Center for Labor Studies and the National Labor College are a single entity. The organization was officially renamed the George Meany Center for Labor Studies–The National Labor College (GMC-NLC). As of this writing we are beginning our self-study year in preparation for the full accreditation site visit in 2003.

The "Architecture" of the National Labor College

Designing labor's college presented an extraordinary opportunity to rethink some basic assumptions about how higher education might be structured for adult trade union activists and members—and, by extension, for working people in general. I will try to briefly summarize a number of basic principles on which the college is constructed.

1. Recognition of Adult Status

The frustration, resentment and, too often, self-doubt that many workers feel because the value of their experience seldom receives formal recognition is far deeper than is often appreciated—even by progressive educators. Freire repeatedly emphasizes this point. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he powerfully describes the struggle of the oppressed for recognition as full human beings.[16] As my friend and colleague Mike Merrill argues, the struggle by working men and women for recognition as adult human beings with the same rights of citizenship as those possessed by elites is a leitmotif in the development of democratic philosophy from Plato to Augustine, through Locke, Hegel, and Simmel, down to the present.[17]

Workers form unions and demand recognition from their employers not just in the formal legal and pragmatic sense to improve their economic lot—though this is certainly a priority. They also seek recognition in the deeper psychological and social sense captured by Freire's emphasis on being acknowledged as fully human and entitled to political equality. Part of this psychological and social recognition involves valuing the contribution workers make to society through their work. The strong desire for full recognition—in both economic and social terms—of the value of workers' practical knowledge and skill has been central to the labor movement in the United States for two centuries. As Jane Addams wrote a century ago in the *First Report of the Labor Museum at Hull House*, "to build on worker experience is vital for more than that the best 'education' cannot do for any of us."[18]

In the United States, formal educational credentials are a powerful form of recognition for experience. In the history of U.S. postsecondary education one of the great progressive victories of the last several decades was to "get beyond seat-time," that is, to establish a method of assessing the equivalence of learning in formal and certain nonformal or informal settings. Many colleges and universities now accept a certain number of credits earned through nonformal or informal learning experiences that are properly documented in an educational portfolio. However, very few accept the full value of the portfolio assessment and most charge full tuition on each portfolio credit.[19] From the standpoint of popular education principles, this poses two problems. First it presents an enormous practical problem. Very few working people can obtain or afford fair recognition for their accumulated experience. One of the most common stories we hear from prospective students is, "I've probably got enough credit equivalents to get two B.A.s but when they ask me in job interviews about my education level, I have to say 'I've got some college but I don't have a degree.' I want to be able to just say I have a bachelor's." The second problem is pedagogical: the failure to acknowledge prior life and work experience as a valid part of the educational process means that these experiences cannot serve as the critical starting place for reflection and problematizing.

The foundation of the NLC is to recognize, to the fullest extent allowable within the limits of higher education statutes and accreditation standards, both the individual's and the union's extraordinary investment in securing education, training, and development opportunities. Most of our students, whose average age is forty-two, enter the college with the maximum allowable credits—a total of ninety through a combination of transfer credits from other institutions and portfolio. Our students' rich experience base then serves as the basis of a curriculum built on the concepts of problem-posing (as opposed to problem-solving) and critical thinking, which provide the learner with maximum flexibility to choose his or her own learning program.

Courtesy GMC-NLC

Student theater performance.

2. Valuing Experience

Experience is one of those fuzzy concepts that requires, as the great psychologist William James warned, that we "attach a definite meaning to that word."[20] Experience per se does not automatically equate to formal learning, either in the best liberal arts tradition or in popular education practice. Experiences must be reflected upon to discover their meaning, assess their value, and locate them in the existing store of knowledge. In John Dewey's famous description, the movement between reflection and action is the mechanism through which the human capacity for deductive and inductive thinking produces personal and social development.[21]

Labor's college cannot be only an institution that trains activists in the skills required for action. It also needs to be an institution that promotes the skills of reflection, inquiry, and exploration of the consequences of alternative courses of action. Further, it needs to be a center of scholarship on the labor movement, accumulating and disseminating the knowledge acquired from individual and collective experience.

To meet these goals, the curriculum of the National Labor College places heavy emphasis on the skills of problem-posing, critical reading, writing, discussion, and debate. This begins in the first course students take, educational planning, where they learn to reflect upon and document what they have learned from their experiences and to extract the generalizable knowledge they have acquired. Initially pioneered in order to help students prepare their education portfolios, this course has become the anchor of the curriculum. The reason seems obvious in retrospect: many (but by no means all) of our students have had some kind of negative encounter with formal education, either in secondary school or college. Most of these negative experiences result from being tracked out of academic courses and into general education courses based on test scores, grades, or simple discrimination. Many of our students have developed what Patrick Finn terms an "oppositional identity" toward formal schooling.[22] To defend their dignity in the face of negative schooling experiences, many have adopted a stance that Herbert Kohl calls, "I won't learn from you."[23] Our curriculum is very academically demanding and, in order to succeed, students must develop a new orientation to learning.

The educational planning course begins by asking students to prepare essays describing their past relationship to education. These essays provide powerful support for Finn's and Kohl's theses. They are filled with the stories of humiliation, poor teaching, lack of books and materials, economic deprivation, and low expectations—on the part of both parents and schools—that is prevalent in working-class education. They are also filled with stories about how "the union became their school" by providing opportunities for learning, occupational skill development, and leadership in which they were able to experience success and to "realize that maybe I was smarter than I thought."

The course then shows students how to formally document the learning they acquired in their "union school." First they must learn the definition of such academic esoterica as: a college credit (twelve and a half contact hours of instruction with assessment), a Carnegie unit (one to three hours of outside work per hour of instruction), supervised internships (thirty-five hours of activity with assessment per unit of credit) and externships (150 hours of activity). To be eligible for admission to the National Labor College prospective students must have earned a minimum of fifty-six college credits either through transfer or through experiential learning. Their portfolio characterizes and classifies prior learning experiences gained through traditional education (transfer credit), pre-assessed training (apprenticeships, nursing programs, and so on), and knowledge acquired through work, the union, and community service. Although no two students share the same experience, the typical student transcript from our present student body—made up of elected union leaders, staff, and activists—reflects approximately thirty to forty transfer credits, an additional forty to fifty credits through third-party assessed training, and fifteen to twenty credits through experience.

It is hard to overstate the impact on students when they discover that they are in fact college seniors instead of freshmen or sophomores and must only complete the thirty-credit major in labor studies in order to graduate. As one student put it, "this is the most incredibly motivating thing that's ever happened to me. I have dreamed about finishing my degree for twenty years—mostly because I want to set a good example for my kids—and now I realize I can actually do it."

Through the process of first recognizing the value of their experience themselves, and then having it formally recognized in the form of a college transcript, our students discover that they are fully ready for advanced college level study. This, combined with the problem-posing, critical reading, and writing emphasis in their first courses and the respect afforded them by their teachers, shows them that a different approach to formal education is possible.

3. Emphasizing Problem-Posing and Action-Taking

The hallmark of popular education is constructing educational environments in which working people can ask and answer questions about why the society they live in is structured the way it is and how it can be changed for the better. The ability to ask these questions is also one of the hallmarks of a liberal arts education. This is precisely why conservatives want to limit access to it. In the lexicon of higher education these are the skills of analysis, synthesis, theorizing, critical thinking, and research. In designing the NLC we decided to make these skills the fulcrum of the curriculum. All students are required to take a research methods course and complete a senior seminar. Together these two courses prepare them to design and complete original research papers on topics of their own choosing. They must first learn to pose researchable problems and then to design a method for studying the problem.[24] Their conclusions should point to concrete actions that may be taken to change the situation. These twenty- to thirty-page papers are then reviewed by faculty members in much the way comprehensive examinations are read in many master's and doctoral programs. Papers must pass two out of three readers in order for the student to graduate.

Senior research papers cover a broad range of labor and industrial relations topics. Loretta Springer from the Amalgamated Transit Union wondered why there were no two-way radio communications in California mass transit vehicles. She suspected that there were serious safety consequences. After researching the problem, she used her research as the basis for a successful campaign to get the state legislature to mandate such communication devices on all buses. Reynaldo Martinez from PACE studied the relationship between engineer fatigue and locomotive accidents. He found a clear correlation, and his research is now the basis for union legislative and collective bargaining initiatives to reduce mandatory overtime and certain types of shift work in order to reduce the risk of fatigue-related accidents. Ruth Marlin of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) investigated the retirement intentions of NATCA members and discovered an impending skill crisis due to upcoming retirements and the length of training time needed for new hires to become competent. Her research has formed the basis of union legislative and bargaining activity to help avoid the crisis. And Jaime Contreras of the Service Employees International Union prepared a case study of his local's use of non-NLRB organizing tactics in organizing janitors in Baltimore.

These are just a few of the hundreds of original research papers that have been completed over the past four years by National Labor College students working under the guidance of a skilled thesis advisor. Collectively they add up to a significant addition to the corpus of trade union knowledge and experience. Beginning in 2003, as part of our accreditation requirements, we will do our first five-year follow-up research with students from the class of 1999 to learn more about what they have done with their education. These alumni assessments will be a regular part of the college's activity.

4. Creating a Teaching-Learning Community

NLC faculty and staff recognize that our students are our peers. We realize daily that we have as much to learn from them—perhaps more—as they from us. We have been able to attract a group of outstanding faculty members on the resident as well as the nonresident faculty. This has helped us attract a rapidly growing and diverse student body made up of dynamic trade union leaders from all over the country and increasingly all over the world. In addition we have developed a unique set of articulation agreements with unions and academic institutions that allow them to partner with us in delivering the NLC curriculum. The result is an emerging community of colearners in which activism and scholarship are integrated.

Future Prospects

All of us connected with the NLC realize the fragility of our experiment. Resources are a constant problem. Learning to collaborate with other institutions—both union and academic—is difficult. And we are still learning how to better integrate the courses in the curriculum to make a coherent whole. We have of course faced intense criticism from those who question whether we are just a "diploma mill." But our students are our best advocates. Many of them have been to other colleges or universities, and they are well able to judge how well our program compares in quality to other higher education institutions. They are excited about their studies and highly motivated to complete their research. They keep us motivated.

It is important to remember that what we are doing is not really new except for the fact that it is formal instead of informal. As John Hurst's paper makes clear

Courtesy GMC:NLC

Student-faculty dialogue.

we are following in the footsteps of the incredible network of hundreds of labor colleges that flourished in the early decades of the twentieth century. These colleges, of which Brookwood was the best known, represented an attempt by working people to create their own informal system of education outside the state-sanctioned formal system to which they were denied access. None survived. The principal reason was not because they attracted the ire of the official educational establishment but because they angered the official labor movement of the time; hence Elaine Bernard's caution about the risk contained in popular education's emphasis on critical consciousness. It can be turned on unions themselves with very negative consequences for the education institution or teacher. Here it is vital to remember Freire's central point that education should not be used for negative and destructive purposes. Rather through the dialogic method workers and union members must take responsibility for reshaping their institutions in constructive and politically accountable ways. This is the philosophy of the NLC.

In the early years of the last century organized labor sanctioned corporate demands for the creation of a two-track system in U.S. public education: formal college for the few and nonformal vocational training for the many. At the time it was in fact a step forward that eventually paved the way for universal public high school. But it is time to take the next step forward toward democratizing education. In his 2001 State of the State address, Maryland Governor Parris Glendenning proposed that it is now time to start preparing for universal access to publicly funded higher education just as we did with high school in the twentieth century. We in the labor movement and in workers' and labor education institutions should endorse this idea. But we must use our collective power to insist that the content and methods of popular education find a home in formal working-class education.

The author gratefully acknowledges helpful comments from a number of colleagues on earlier drafts of this chapter. In addition to the editors of the volume, Helena Worthen and Katherine Scciachatano provided especially thoughtful feedback.

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[1] See H. Coombs, R. C. Prosser, and M. Ahmed, *New Paths to Learning: For Rural Children and Youth* (New York: International Council for Educational Development, 1973). These authors propose what has become the classic typology of learning opportunities: formal, nonformal, and informal. Formal learning occurs in colleges and universities where the curriculum and learning environment are controlled by the institution. Nonformal learning is less structured and more responsive to the needs of the learners but still primarily directed by teachers. It is often concerned with social inequity and contains a social action component. Informal learning occurs when individuals initiate and complete learning in their natural environment. See also Sharan B. Merriam and Rosemary S. Caffarella, *Learning in Adulthood: A Comprehensive Guide*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999). These authors have proposed that the typology be amended to include self-directed learning as a type of informal learning. Indigenous learning, though no longer considered important in developed countries, still forms perhaps the predominant type of learning in much of the world; Gregory Cajete, *Look to the Mountain: An Ecology of Indigenous Education* (Skyland: Kivaki Press, 1994). This author refers to indigenous learning as "an essential life-sharing act of each generation of a people to nurture that which has given them life and to preserve for

future generations the guiding stories of their collective journey to find life."

[2] Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

[3] Elliot Krause, *Death of the Guilds: Professions, States, and the Advance of Capitalism, 1930 to the Present* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1999). This work provides an excellent discussion of the relationship between professionals who practice their profession and their colleagues in the academy who do the training.

[4] Alan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); and E. D. Hirsch Jr., *Cultural Literacy, What Every American Needs to Know* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

[5] For an excellent discussion of the impact of Bloom, Hirsch, and others in their genre on formal education see Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux, *Postmodern Education: Politics, Culture, and Social Criticism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1991).

[6] Richard Rorty, *Achieving our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998).

[7] R. Pipan, "Towards a Curricular Perspective of Workplaces," in *Socialization and Learning at Work: A New Approach to the Learning Process in the Workplace and Society*, eds. Heinz Leyman and Hy Kornbluh (Aldershopt: Gowar, 1989), 159–80.

[8] This description is highly oversimplified and omits many of the more nuanced and complex positions. For an excellent discussion of educational ideologies and their philosophical roots, see W. F. O'Neil, *Educational Ideologies: Contemporary Expressions of Educational Philosophy* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Goodyear Publishing, 1981). O'Neil points out that the extreme right and left of the ideological spectrum tend to converge in the various forms of educational fundamentalism. Though different in most other respects, these both reject the basic rules of empirical science and subscribe to individuals' experience of "revealed truth" (through either historical or religious sources) as the highest source of authority. As O'Neill further points out, there is never a perfect translation of political *philosophy* into educational *practice*. Political *reality* intervenes.

[9] Joseph D. Novak, *A Theory of Education* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1977); Joseph D. Novak and D. B. Gowin, *Learning How to Learn* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985).

[10] Gilbert Rile, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984).

[11] Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Seabury, 1973).

[12] Steven Brint and Jerome Karabel, *The Diverted Dream: Community Colleges and the Promise of Educational Opportunity in America 1900-1985* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995). This study is just the latest in a long line of research that demonstrates the role of the community college in "cooling out" and redirecting the aspirations of working-class students away from baccalaureate instruction and toward vocational/technical instruction. See e.g., Bowls and Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America*.

[13] Freire's use of the term *teacher-student* (referring to teachers) and *student-teacher* (referring to students) is his way of emphasizing that each person has something to learn and something to teach.

[14] Richard Boyatzis et al., *Innovation in Professional Education: Steps on a Journey from Teaching to Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995). In this work, the authors describe the transformation of the Business School at Case Western Reserve from a traditional teacher/subject-centered program to a learner-centered program.

[15] Joan L. Wills, "Skills Standards, a Primer," Institute for Educational Leadership, Center for Workforce Development, http://wdr.doleta.gov/opr/fulltext/95-voluntary.pdf.

[16] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1982), 27–28. Though published in English later than *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1973), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was Freire's first major work.

[17] Michael Merrill, conversation with author, June 2001.

[18] R. D. Reynolds, "Labour at Leisure—Not Time to be Wasted: Global Professional Sports, Artistic Endeavors and Higher Education" (paper presented at the International Labour Movement on the Threshold of Two Centuries conference, Stockholm, October 2002).

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[19] At the National Labor College, we use the term *recognition* instead of *assessment*.

[20] William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Holt, 1890).

[21] John Dewey, *How We Think* (Washington, D.C.: Heath, 1910).

[22] Patrick J. Finn, *Literacy With an Attitude: Educating Working-Class Children in Their Own Self-Interest* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).

[23] Herbert Kohl and Colin Greer, *"I Won't Learn from You": And Other Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment* (New York: New Press, 1995).

[24] One of the continuing challenges is to convince students that if they already know the answer to the question they want to study, they are not writing a research paper.

Courtesy Elaine Bernard.

Case Method in Labor Leadership Education

By Elaine Bernard

What is "Case Method?"

Case method is an active and engaging form of instruction that places learners in the role of decision makers facing a complicated real-life situation. It focuses on teaching learners to identify problems, analyze the underlying causes, consider alternative courses of action, and develop recommendations for proceeding. It employs carefully crafted narratives (cases) that supply the learners with a common factual background describing the situation to be analyzed. Most cases are rich in content, defying a simple answer or solution. By bringing real-life situations into the classroom, cases readily engage learners and encourage the creation of a critical learning environment where opinions are openly shared, assessed, and debated with participants learning from each other.

Case analysis has been the primary form of instruction at the Harvard Business School (HBS) since its founding in 1908, and today it is the dominant method of management instruction internationally.[1] Contending that "wisdom can't be told,"[2] case method assumes that ". . . management is a skill rather than a collection of techniques or concepts," and "the best way to learn a skill is to practice in a simulation-type process."[3]

This hands-on, experiential approach to learning is also ideally suited for engaging experienced union leaders in discussions of strategic choice, organizational change, union structure, and ways to change the approach to organizing and representation. For example, we use a case based on a health care union struggling to overcome staff resistance to an ambitious membership mobilization plan. The case details the union's attempt to implement a campaign to deal with nurses' increased workload and to strengthen the presence of the union in the workplace, and it describes the resistance of some of the union staff. This case has led to detailed discussions about the complex issues associated with transforming a union from one that utilizes a traditional representation approach to one that is based on a campaign or organizing model.

Why Is It Well Suited for Union Leadership Education?

By describing real-life union predicaments, case method has an immediate relevance for union leaders. It provides a rare opportunity for leaders to discuss broad strategic issues with peers, where the case "serves as a metaphor for a particular set of problems."[4] For activists who have been out of the classroom for many years, and for those who question the relevance of formal education for union leaders, cases immediately engage learners both intellectually and emotionally. Rather than discussing abstract concepts and principles, learners are able to develop generalized principles through analyzing actual union situations.

A major challenge for labor educators is to develop courses and programs to teach advanced leadership skills to senior union staff and officers. Labor has always viewed the fact that the overwhelming majority of its full-time staff and leaders come from within its ranks as an important strength of the movement. While unions have wide variations in governance structures, as democratic, self-governed organizations they place a premium on staff and leaders rising from among their activist cadre. Accordingly, labor leaders most often learn organizing, representation, and leadership skills on the job as rank-and-file activists. The most fortunate leaders have this "school of hard knocks" approach augmented by mentoring from a senior colleague and possibly by the occasional educational programs offered by either their union or by postsecondary labor education programs. But in comparison to the resources devoted to management training, union leadership training is ad hoc at best.

How Are Cases Taught?

Ideally, case learning consists of four parts: individual reading and analysis of the case, small group discussion of the case and preparation for the classroom discussion, a classroom-facilitated discussion, and a concluding minilecture summarizing what has been learned and the wider context or insights that can be draw from the case.

To prepare for a case discussion, learners will need to read a case a number of times. The first quick reading should give the reader an overview, outlining the events and the facts of the case, but a second and even third reading is usually necessary in order to analyze the case, identify key actors and decisions, and begin to formulate possible action plans.

Business schools, with large classes of 80 to 125 students, tend to emphasize teamwork and study groups. Individual reading of a case will normally be followed by a study group discussion and preparation of the case. Through small group discussions, learners formulate an analysis of the situation and a plan of action and discuss problems and questions arising from the case. Study questions may be provided to guide groups in their case preparation. However, an important part of case analysis is encouraging learners to develop their own inquiry into what are the important issues that the union leaders must address in the case and, significantly, what action the union should take.

Courtesy Elaine Bernard.

Union leaders read the case they will be discussing in the Harvard Trade Union Program.

Cases are designed to be taught during a sixty- to ninety-minute class session. The instructor opens the case by either "cold calling" a learner to begin the discussion on the case or soliciting a volunteer to address the case. Successful case discussions evolve toward a process where learners talk to the entire class and each other analyzing the complex problems in the case and offering differing approaches and action plans.

Case discussion "takes off" when participants become deeply engaged with the problem. Each intervention opens new possibilities for action and further develops the class's understanding of the situation and the opportunities for intervention. For case method to work, students need to make decisions based on the evidence in the case and defend their position using the information provided in the case. While there are no strictly right or wrong solutions in case method, the class will often conclude that there are action proposals that are more appealing and less attractive based on both their feasibility and their likely outcome. The instructor generally does not attempt to be the arbiter of various proposals and analysis but rather seeks to highlight options and points of conflict and to develop an analytic framework.

Case teaching is the opposite of the normal, hierarchical education model, where the teacher imparts information to passive learners—often referred to as the "banking" method of education. As Charles I. Gragg, an early member of the Harvard Business School faculty, points out in a Harvard Business School article on case titled *Because Wisdom Can't be Told*, ". . . all members of the academic group, teacher ***and*** students, are in possession of the same basic materials in the light of which analyses are to be made and decisions arrived at. Each, therefore, has an identical opportunity to make a contribution. . . ." Gragg further notes that, "there is no single, demonstrably right answer to a business problem. For the student or businessperson it cannot be a matter of peeking in the back of a book to see if he has arrived at the right solution. In every business situation, there is always a reasonable possibility that the best answer has not yet been found—even by teachers."[5] Clearly, the same is true for unions and labor leadership.

At the conclusion of a case discussion, instructors will often seek to summarize the problem that the case was chosen to illustrate and seek to highlight insights from the discussion. The instructor may also seek to use this opportunity to generalize some lessons from the specific case.

What Is the Role of an Instructor in Case Method?

Courtesy Elaine Bernard.

Elaine Bernard, executive director of the Trade Union Program at Harvard University.

As with other methods of teaching, much of the work of case method for an instructor takes place long before he or she enters the classroom. Course instructional work begins with a detailed course outline listing the course goals and objectives. Refining this outline, specific topics are identified for each class session. Then, individual cases (and where appropriate supplementary material, including extra readings, videos, etc.) are chosen for each topic. A course using cases often entails choosing cases from a variety of settings (public sector, private sector, construction, industrial, education, etc.) with each case unique and able to stand on its own but presented in a way that allows students to refer back to earlier cases in order to contrast and compare analysis and organizational and strategic choices.

According to Gragg, "under the case system, the instructor's role is to assign the cases for discussion, to act as a responsible member of the group delegated to provoke argumentative thinking, and to guide discussion by his own contributions and questions towards points of major importance; and, if he chooses, to take a final position on the viewpoints which have been threshed out before him."[6]

For an instructor one of the most difficult aspects of case teaching is striking a balance between guiding the class in its discussion and maintaining a classroom environment in which "the students accept and maintain ownership of the discussion."[7] An important aspect of any class is establishing a safe learning environment, where participants feel they can take risks and where their comments will be respected.

As a general rule in case instruction, less participation by the instructor is better than more. Inexperienced case instructors are often tempted to "fill in" facts or background information on the case and can quickly find themselves slipping into either a lecture or an uninspiring question-and-answer session on the facts of the case. The role of the instructor, at least in the early part of a case discussion, should be to maintain the class's focus on a deep (rather than broad) analysis of the case and to push individual learners to offer a plan of action, which the class can then weigh and discuss. Instructors will sometimes seek to "turn the case around" once or twice during the class discussion. This is done by having the class analyze the case from the perspective of one of the decision makers or a specific point in time and then partway through the discussion asking the class to change perspective.

Going into the class discussion, the instructor will need a general outline of how long to permit discussion on various points of analysis. Many instructors use overheads or a board to assist in clarifying the discussion and analysis and to heighten or highlight contradictions and conflicts.

At the end of the class discussion, the instructor may choose to give either a minilecture highlighting some of the key points of the discussion or raise further questions to be addressed in later sessions. In some cases, the last few minutes may be spent on a follow-up to the case, with a "B" or "C" case of one or two pages, which gives additional information.

How Are Cases Different from Traditional "Case Studies?"

Cases are similar to case studies in that they contain vital information about a union or group of unions at a time of change or challenge. However, because cases are designed to be used as teaching tools, they are for the most part shorter than case studies. Also, while a case may be an account of an actual situation, the information given to readers is designed to aid in provoking an analytical discussion rather than to provide all the relevant facts and issues involved in a decision-making situation. Cases work best when they identify individual decision makers and allow for a class discussion where learners are asked to analyze the problem from various perspectives. But unlike case studies, cases do not seek to draw conclusions and are written to illustrate a complicated, though potentially generalizable, problem. They will often be written so readers are given background information leading up to a decision point, and the case will often end before an actual decision is made. For the most part, shorter is better in case writing. Cases are between five and fifteen pages long and they will usually include appendices with further information to analyze. Some cases will also have a shorter, second part (i.e., a one- to three-page "B" and "C" case), which gives information on the decision made.

How Are Cases Written?

Cases are written as teaching tools. As with a simulation or a role-play, case learners are expected to develop and defend an action plan. But unlike role-plays and simulations, cases demand a much more rigorous command of the details of the situation, and case discussions are designed to develop participants' analytical skills. Cases are designed to give information for a class discussion rather than to serve as an illustration of either effective or ineffective handling of a situation. They should not be "war stories" of famous disputes, nor should they be "morality tales" teaching the right way to do things, or enunciations of an organization's political "line." Most cases assume that readers will have some degree of familiarity with the subject. So, for example, North American union cases may assume that learners are generally familiar with the industrial relations framework of the Wagner Act but not necessarily familiar with the intricacies of other labor-related legislation or industry-specific issues. A strength of case teaching is that unions learn about each other and are able to contrast and compare a wide variety of structures, environments, and approaches.

Most cases include lengthy appendices with detailed information that learners will need to develop an action plan. As cases are often designed to deal with generalizable analytical methods, a course will tend to use cases from a variety of industries, organizations, and settings. While business schools have for many years sought to identify the key skills necessary for successful business leadership, unions have tended to be more idiosyncratic in their approach to union leadership. Case method offers the opportunity to identify and analyze generalizable union leadership skills.

Case instruction notes, which are not provided to the learners, are a valuable tool for teachers. They often include a number of possible approaches to teaching the case as well as generalizable lessons that can be drawn from the case. They may also include additional information either for setting up the context of the case or for the concluding lecture.

Teaching Cases to Union Leaders

For most learners, first attempts at using case method usually require a period of adjustment. While cases are a shorter read than most articles, they require considerably more attention to detail and generally require multiple readings. Few first-time case learners are able to read cases with the necessary analytical eye, and fewer still are able to come to a class discussion prepared to offer a detailed action plan. Most union leaders, used to best-practice case studies and grievance or dispute simulations, tend to come to an initial case discussion unprepared for the level of analytical discussion of structure, environment, strategic formulation, and implementation at the center of case method. But after one or two cases, most readily embrace the approach, recognizing that it permits them to analyze complicated leadership decision-making processes in a risk-free environment.

Case education is predicated on risk taking. However, the risk taking in a classroom setting is clearly of a very different characteristic than the higher-stakes demand of actual practice. The highly political (and competitive) character of union leadership can occasionally make it difficult to establish the proper educational environment for such risk-taking learning to flourish. Yet it is hard to argue that organized labor is unique (as opposed to business) in this regard. The instructor plays an important role in creating a safe environment for risk taking while encouraging the class to embrace a critical learning environment.

For all learners, case preparation demands the acquisition of new skills—the ability to analyze a complicated situation, to develop an action plan from only partial (and occasionally contradictory) information, and to outline and defend the plan before a group of peers. Again, with labor, which places a premium on experience, there is some resistance to "armchair" analysis. Yet, few in the labor movement would challenge the need to school a new generation of leaders in the analytical skills that case method is designed to assist in developing.

Courtesy Elaine Bernard

Participants in the Harvard Trade Union Program listen to an overview of the case method approach.

Case and Popular Education

At first blush, it's hard to imagine anything farther apart than the dominant form of pedagogy at the Harvard Business School and the radical, liberation pedagogy of Paulo Friere favored by progressive labor educators. Yet case method does share some of the attributes of popular education. It is a learner-centered method in which the teacher's role is primarily that of facilitator who guides the discussion and prods the group to delve into various dimensions within the case. It is a critical pedagogy defying a single "right answer" or simple course of action. And, it is a collective learning methodology, where the knowledge and experience of the group analyzing a case contributes significantly to the quality of the analysis and the depth of the discussion.

As with popular education, case is also a pedagogy that can easily fall into misuse. Without critical, open questioning, popular education often flattens into a series of games, activities, and simulations, never delving into the deeper analysis and insight promised by liberation education. Case can similarly descend into "war stories" and "armchair analysis." Yet when it works well it is an enjoyable, exhilarating experience, with ideas and insight seemingly popping. When it does not work it can appear to be manipulative, lead to phony participation, and leave the instructor seeming simply ill-prepared. As with popular education, in case method the process is as important as the outcome. And the outcome for individual learners depends not only on their individual effort but on the collective effort of the entire class.

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[1] E. Raymond Corey, "Case Method Teaching," Harvard Business School Case 9-581-058 (November 1998): 3–4. The Harvard Business School has referred to this practice as "laboratory method" or "problem method" from its inception and has held that (1) it would use cases as teaching vehicles in place of lectures and assigned readings, and (2) it would engage students in a collective learning process, getting them to teach themselves and each other.

[2] Charles I. Gragg, "Because Wisdom Can't be Told," Harvard Business School Case 9-451-005 (November 1982): 1.

[3] Benson P. Shapiro, "An Introduction to Cases," Harvard Business School Case 9-584-097 (October 1988): 1.

[4] Shapiro, "An Introduction to Cases," 1.

[5] Gragg, "Because Wisdom Can't be Told," 4.

[6] Gragg, "Because Wisdom Can't be Told," 5.

[7] Shapiro, "An Introduction to Cases," 3.

Experiences from the North and South

Chapter

9

Courtesy Juan De Lara.

Confronting Trade Policies from the Bottom Up

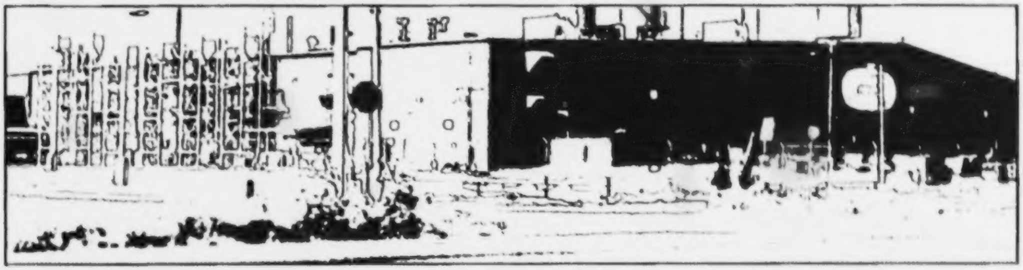
By Linda Delp and Juan De Lara [1]

The field of worker health and safety has an historic and global tradition of using popular education and participatory research to change working conditions. In the early 1980s, several of us in the Los Angeles Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (LACOSH) learned how to use risk maps, or *mapas de riesgo*, from friends and colleagues in Mexico City.[2] They taught us how mapping the workplace can enable workers to collectively identify and prioritize hazards, research their health effects, and organize for safer conditions. In this article, we describe our experiences as part of a trinational training team with the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM). We used risk maps as part of a popular education approach with *maquila* workers on the U.S.-Mexican border. We describe how this process provided the foundation for the *maquila* workers' efforts to organize for better working conditions in an era of increasing globalization, and how the coalition enabled them to confront trade policies and economic structures that place profits above workers' health.

The International Context

From an international business perspective, one of Mexico's greatest assets is its plentiful supply of cheap labor. From the perspective of Mexican workers, however, being cheap labor means exploitation—dangerous working conditions and wages far below the cost of living.

Even prior to the passage of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, U.S. and Canadian owned companies had begun to close shop, moving south in search of cheaper labor and lax enforcement of worker health and environmental regulations.[3] However, NAFTA's passage in 1994



Courtesy Juan De Lara.

A foreign-owned *maquiladora* on the Mexican side of the U.S.-Mexico border.

gave U.S. and multinational companies added incentives to move their manufacturing operations to the *maquila* zone along the U.S.-Mexican border. [4]

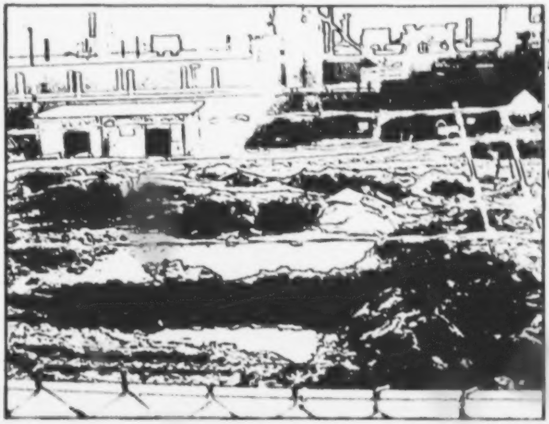
NAFTA has been a vital part of Mexico's economic and political strategy, with the *maquiladora* industry a crucial piece of the larger economic plan. The Mexican government, therefore, has an interest in protecting the development and growth of *maquiladoras* and sees workers who demand better wages and working conditions as a threat to its ability to attract foreign investment. As a result, Mexican workers who organize for better wages and working conditions must confront both multinational corporations and their own government. In addition, many workers face yet another obstacle—their unions. Company unions, which represent employer interests, have been established in some *maquiladoras* to prevent workers from organizing independent unions that truly represent them. It is in this context that workers must confront government, business, and company union partnerships designed to maintain the comparative advantage of cheap Mexican labor.

NAFTA itself is structured to the advantage of business interests. Worker and environmental protections are included in "side agreements" that do not have the same weight as do the protections afforded investors, which are included in the actual agreement. Even the name of the labor side agreement, the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation or NAALC, embodies its limitations: the organizations created to administer the labor side agreement are charged with developing non-enforceable "cooperative programs" with very limited recourse if cooperation fails.[5] Despite these limitations, workers, unions, and community groups have valiantly attempted to use the process on behalf of workers' rights.

This paper describes the struggle of workers at two auto parts plants in Tamaulipas, Mexico, who filed the first-ever complaint under the NAALC to focus exclusively on workplace health and safety violations.[6] We describe the role of popular education in this struggle to advance workers' rights in the international arena.

Junked Workers: Trinational Coalition Confronts Ergonomic and Chemical Hazards

Autotrim and Customtrim/Breed Mexicana are owned by the Miami-based Breed Corporation. Workers glue and sew leather around automobile steering wheels and gearshifts. They suffer debilitating injuries from fast-paced, repetitive work. They experience headaches and skin irritation from glues and solvents that are used in the process, and they worry about the high rate of miscarriages and birth defects. Management mistreatment of workers is so common that injured workers are known as *jonkeados* (literally, junked workers). So disabled they are no longer able to do their jobs, *jonkeados* are given menial, degrading tasks, told their health problems are psychological, and otherwise insulted until some quit in despair.


Courtesy Juan De Lara

Wastewater from a *maquiladora* often floods a nearby community where *maquila* workers live.

Pablo began to work for Customtrim in 1995 when he was sixteen years old. Two years later he was fired for his activism.

"We would apply the leather to stick shifts in cars," he testified before the U.S. National Administrative Office (NAO), "using a brush to apply the glue, then sewing it on. Each person sewing had to meet a quota of 172 stick shifts a day. And for one [stick shift], you had to make forty-four repetitive movements. So to meet their quota, that's 3,568 movements per shift."[7]

Celia began work at Autotrim in 1993 when she was thirty-two, sewing leather around steering wheels.

"In early 1994," she testified before the NAO, "I began to have problems with my right arm. In July of that same year, I began working with very tough leather. This caused the pain in my arm to become unbearable. I went to the Social Security doctor who stated that nothing was wrong. On September 13, 1996, I met with my supervisor. The company said I was not meeting production demands and I was fired."[8]

In 1997, in an effort to pressure the company to include health and safety protections in their contract, workers at the Customtrim plant initiated a work stoppage over unsafe conditions. The union ultimately signed the contract without the workers' consent and without the desired safety language. The company then fired twenty-eight workers.

Workers then turned to the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras (CJM), a cross-border organization of unions and religious and community groups established in 1989 to address violations of workers' rights and environmental degradation along the U.S.-Mexico border. Early on in CJM's existence, workplace hazards surfaced as one of workers' critical concerns. As a result, CJM developed a health and safety committee, and member organizations along the border worked in alliance with groups in Mexico City, the United States, and Canada to create a training team and to develop worker education programs.[9]

In response to workers' reports of dangerous conditions at Autotrim, Customtrim, and other *maquiladora* plants along the border, the CJM Health and Safety Committee developed a series of train-the-trainer workshops to address the health and safety and labor law violations the companies had committed and to build a network of educated worker activists.

The Role of Popular Education

The train-the-trainer workshops were designed with the following popular education principles in mind:[10]

- Trainers and facilitators should listen. None of the initial trainers had ever worked in a *maquiladora*. We needed to understand what was happening inside the plants. We also needed to address power dynamics that take place in any environment where people identified as "experts" are brought in to teach workers. Many of the workshop participants felt that they had a lot to contribute. They were also leery of people from the United States setting their agenda. In light of those concerns, the workshops were designed to address the problems workers faced and to respect and build on their experiences.
- Techniques and methodologies should help to build a collective consciousness. Workshop facilitators needed to acknowledge that participants had rich and varied backgrounds. To move forward we needed to build a collective understanding that allowed everyone to contribute and to recognize the links they shared to identify problems and solutions. The dialogue allowed participants to develop a critical consciousness of the power structures and the root causes of the problems workers faced in a global economy.
- The dialogue had to lead to action. Action was facilitated by incorporating problem-solving activities in the workshop and by strengthening the infrastructure of border organizations and CJM to support workers' activism after they returned to their communities.

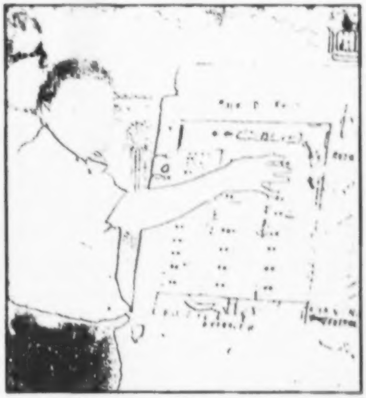
The listening process began with the use of body maps. Workers were asked to identify how their bodies were being affected by the work they did. They did so by placing "ouch" stickers on each other to identify where it hurt. The body mapping allowed workers to discuss the personal nature of scientific

Courtesy UCLA-LOSH

Workers identify where their jobs cause them pain by placing "ouch" stickers on one other.

concepts like ergonomics and created an awareness of the collective nature of their pain. Workers shared powerful and emotional stories of how pain interfered with their lives. "When I get off from work and go home it is very hard for me to cook," said Lupe. "In the winter I cannot do anything because the pain is unbearable. It pains me that my daughters have to do all the household chores."[11]

Workshop participants also drew risk maps, or *mapas de reisgo*, which helped them identify and prioritize the health and safety problems they confronted at their workplace. This simple process was critical to creating a collective awareness that workplace hazards affected more than just isolated individuals. Together, the risk maps and body maps allowed workers to see the connection between their shared personal pain and their workplace environment.[12] Many of the workers had no choice but to work and support their families and had accepted that the daily aches, pain, and injuries were "part of the job." Discussing solutions to these problems allowed workers to realize that they didn't have to accept and suffer the consequences of workplace hazards. Workers who presented their risk maps to the rest of the group could see that their knowledge and experience was as valuable as that of the facilitator.



Courtesy UCLA-LOSH

A worker-organizer presents his group's risk map.

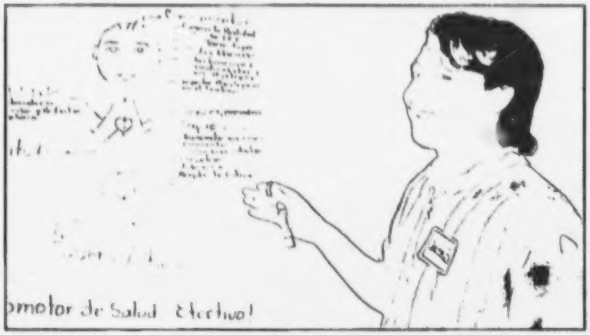
Building on their sense of empowerment, workers learned how to investigate the effects of the chemicals they worked with, to identify alternative job designs, and to research the theretofore completely unknown health and safety regulations in Mexican law. Pablo, who had by then been fired from Customtrim and was organizing workers in other *maquiladoras*, was a regular participant in the workshops: "The workshops awakened our uncertainties, our desire to know what was happening. What chemicals were we using? What were the short- and long-term effects? We had the chance to ask about the doubts that we had."

Through problem-solving activities and role-plays, workers highlighted the power structures and the significant barriers they faced: repressive management, unresponsive unions, and unknown

Courtesy Juan De Lara.

Workshop participants draw a risk map of their workplace to identify the hazards.

government agencies. Through forum theater, workers developed strategies to educate and organize their coworkers and prepared to present complaints to management and to government agencies.[13] In one case, workers acted out the significant problems they faced convincing their coworkers to get involved in their struggle for safer conditions. Workers from a community-based organization intervened, stepping in to demonstrate an alternative approach. They showed how they accompanied workers to their homes in the *colonias* (loosely translated as, squatter settlements) where they were far more responsive, feeling free to also discuss the effect of their injuries on their relationship with their families. In each situation, workers stepped in to the scene to demonstrate their ideas rather than just talking about them. Through this approach, they could practice addressing the power imbalances affecting their daily lives, which in turn helped them to prepare for action after the workshop.



omotor de Salud Efectivo!

Courtesy CJM.

A worker-organizer at a train-the-trainer workshop presents his group's vision of an effective health promoter.

Taking Action

"Learning about health and safety has helped us organize," said Julio, who worked at Autotrim covering steering wheels with leather from 1989 to 1998. "We used the information directly with other workers. For example we ask them, '*Oye*, what is your position at work, how does it affect you?' This has helped us know better how to approach workers about the problems."

Workers also took research into their own hands to address problems with chemical exposure and inadequate ventilation. Mario worked at Autotrim for ten years until 1999, when he left because of the effects of the solvents. "What we did was focus on very practical issues. For example, to know if an extractor functioned, we placed tissues close and if the extractor pulled them, we could say that it functioned more or less; if not, *pues*, it didn't function."

Workers faced considerable barriers to effective use of the health and safety information they learned in the workshops. Mario and some of the other workers attempted to participate on their workplace health and safety committees, which are required by Mexican law. Mario summarized the outcome:

> Autotrim's health and safety committee did not work. The most it did was make sure there was no garbage, that fire extinguishers where there and that the emergency doors weren't locked. I offered ideas about how to improve health and safety conditions at the plant that I had learned from the workshops. I said the committee should see that the plant complied with the health and safety regulations. They told me the committee was not supposed to have anything to do with the regulations. I believe their major goal was that each committee member sign the monthly health and safety report that had to be submitted to the government. The people who wrote the reports would take care not to mention workers' illnesses or injuries. They would also make promises about improvements but they did not follow through. Sometimes we did not agree with the reports and did not want to sign. People from the plant's management would visit us individually to have us sign the reports. If we didn't want to sign, they would pressure us by saying that everybody else had signed, even if that was not true.[15]

Workers finally tired of management inaction and filed complaints with the government health and safety agency, complaints they had developed in the workshops and had practiced submitting through role-plays and forum theater. There too, they were met with indifference. As Pablo recounted:

> Back on May 19, 1998, we submitted a petition for an inspection because of the dangerous working conditions in both plants. After we filed the petition, we telephoned the state offices

> to find out what had happened. We called over and over trying to find out, but to no avail. Before, when I was working there (from 1995–97), I saw some outside people visiting the plant. We think they were inspectors because our supervisors kept telling us to keep working and to clean the floors. They went to see only one or two production lines very quickly and then left or went to the manager's office and talked for a long time. They left, but did not really do any inspection at all.[16]

Workers from Autotrim and Customtrim had faithfully attended the health and safety workshops. They had used the information to educate and organize other workers, they had confronted management, and they had filed complaints with government agencies, all to little avail. The question that surfaced in the workshops became, what next?

After in-depth discussions among workers and CJM members, the workers decided to submit a complaint to the U.S. government under NAFTA's labor side agreement, NAALC. Mario and Julian expressed the sentiment of many of the workers and of PJO, Pastoral Juvenil Obrero, the community-based organization supporting them:

> We wanted to document and denounce the damage being done to us and to our coworkers, those who are still inside the plant. We want the conditions to change, and the government agencies to ensure that companies limit the use of chemicals, that they provide protective equipment and medical attention. We are not looking for justice only for ourselves, but more than anything for those who are still working inside the plants. And not only for those working in Autotrim and Customtrim, but in all the *maquiladoras.* This is a struggle that we must continue because there are many workers who could have the same, or worse, effects than our own.

Courtesy CJM.

Maquila **worker.**

With the help of a creative lawyer and her students, they documented the ergonomic and chemical problems, and cited violations of Mexican regulations. The U.S. National Administrative Office accepted the complaint and held a hearing in December 2000 as part of its investigation. Workers testified, telling their own stories; they developed a computer version of their risk maps, highlighting the ergonomic and chemical hazards; and they created a visual map of the ventilation system, showing the inadequacies of the extraction system and the increased chemical exposure to those who worked at stations farther from the motor powering the system. They also counted the number of repetitive motions needed to sew the leather onto the steering wheel, demonstrating that workers at different stations had to make between 2,000 to 10,000 repetitive wrist motions a day.

The hearing, however, seemed to be the last opening for worker input. The NAALC process is controlled by government agencies, thereby limiting workers' control. The U.S. National Administrative Office ultimately recommended consultations between the U.S. Department of Labor and its Mexican counterpart, a lengthy process that excludes workers. After months with no visible results, the workers, CJM, and member organizations wrote to Elaine Chao, U.S. Secretary of Labor, urging that the case proceed, for the first time, to the next level of the process, which would require convening a trinational objective evaluation committee of experts to review the case—a request that was denied. Congressional representatives have come on board, requesting an account of progress from the Department of Labor, but the only response to date has been to establish a binational working group of government experts, once again excluding workers and their representatives from the process despite repeated requests for worker participation.[16]

Whether the Autotrim and Customtrim workers will actually see any remedies for themselves or their coworkers is questionable. They are, however, involved in a larger process of testing the worker protection mechanisms supposedly in place to protect workers in an era of free trade. If this process does not work it will be of critical importance to highlight its inadequacies as part of the debate over the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas), with the ultimate goal of ensuring that trade does not progress at the expense of workers' health and safety.

Outcomes and Lessons Learned

The regional health and safety workshops had two important goals: to assist workers in their immediate struggle to improve their working conditions and to develop capacity among organizations along the U.S.-Mexican border to confront the often abysmal health and safety conditions facing *maquiladora* workers.

It is clear from workers' reflections and follow-up evaluations that the popular education methods used in the workshops advanced leadership development, and that workers used the information and strategies developed in the workshops to educate and organize their coworkers to confront workplace hazards. Our initial guiding principles informed the development of workshops, ensuring that the discussion was framed around workers' experience. Workers identified the problems and developed strategies to address them. They were then able to clearly articulate the issues to their coworkers, to employers, and to government agencies and bargained for workplace change from an educated and strategic position.

It is also clear that the popular education process must include developing the infrastructure needed to support workers who take collective action, advancing worker and union organizing in the long haul—despite roadblocks and setbacks—and operating with an international vision. We are left with the challenge facing the workers along the *maquila* zone and workers in all countries: How can we strengthen cross-border work, unions, and other infrastructures to help workers organize to confront trade policies that do not respect workers' rights and workers' health?

We do not pretend to have the answer to this question; we do maintain that a popular education approach that respects workers' experience is a critical first step to finding the answer.

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[1] Linda Delp and Juan De Lara both previously worked at the UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program where they, together with Marta Segura and representatives from the United Auto Workers (UAW), Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), and Centro de Investigación Laboral y Asesoría Sindical (CILAS [Center for Labor Research and Union Consulting]), planned the CJM Border Regional Health and Safety Workshops.

[2] COSH groups are Committees for Occupational Safety and Health that bring together workers, unions, and health and legal professionals to educate and organize for safe working conditions. They originated in Chicago in 1972 and now form a network of approximately twenty groups throughout the United States.

[3] In 1965, Mexico established the Border Industrialization Program (BIP), which laid the foundation for the growth of the *maquiladora* industry. The BIP gave foreign companies incentives to operate in Mexico, allowing them to import raw materials and machinery without paying tariffs; http://www.pbs.org/kpbs/theborder/history/timeline/22.html.

[4] Employment more than doubled between 1994 and 2001, with nearly 1.3 million workers employed as of May 2001. Institute for Policy Studies, "Seven Years Under NAFTA," http://www.ips-dc.org; Institute Nacional de Estatistica Geografia e Informatica (INEGI), http://www.stps.gob.mx.

[5] U.S. Department of Labor, *North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation, A Guide* (Washington D.C., 1998).

[6] Health and safety is one of only three issues that could potentially lead to trade sanctions. To date, none of the twenty-four complaints filed under the NAFTA labor side agreement have gone beyond the level of ministerial consultations, i.e., consultations between secretaries of labor. There are three steps between ministerial consultations and sanctions.

[7] Names of all workers cited in this article have been changed to protect their confidentiality. Hearing before the U.S. National Administrative Office, San Antonio, Texas, December 12, 2000.

[8] U.S. Department of Labor, *Public Report of Review of NAO Submission No. 2000-01* (Washington D.C., 2001); http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/nao/pubrep2000-1.htm.

[9] The groups included the Frente Autentico del Trabajo (FAT) and CILAS based in Mexico City; the Labor Occupational Safety and Health (LOSH) Program at the University of California Los Angeles; the Labor Occupational Health Program

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(LOHP) at the University of California Berkeley; the UAW; the Maquiladora Health and Safety Support network in the United States; and the CAW in Canada.

[10] We want to acknowledge the network of popular education practitioners and critical thinkers throughout Latin America who have contributed to our own development as popular educators. These include Paolo Friere, Augusto Boal, Alforja, Jorge Mujica, and others from Centro de Investigación y Asesoría Sindical de Trabajadores (CICAST); and in the United States, our colleagues from the American Public Health Association (APHA) Occupational Health and Safety Section; and many others too numerous to name.

[11] Hearing before the U.S. National Administrative Office.

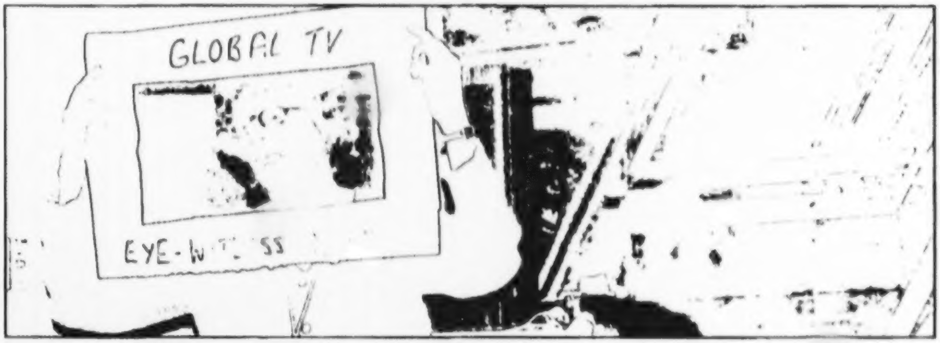
[12] Details of how to use body maps and risk maps, as well as additional health and safety resources, are available at the website of *Hazards Magazine*: http://www.hazards.org/diyresearch/index.htm. Also see endnotes for chapter seven, "Building a Worker Health and Safety Movement."

[13] The term *forum theater* was coined by Augusto Boal. Workers enact a situation in which they feel powerless; other workers are then invited to intervene, stepping into the scene to provide alternative ideas. For an approach to using this in the labor movement, see Teresa Conrow and Linda Delp, "Teaching Organizing through Workers' Experiences," *Labor Studies Journal* (spring 1999).

[14] U.S. Department of Labor, *Public Report of Review of NAO Submission.*

[15] Hearing before the U.S. National Administrative Office.

[16] Submitters of the Autotrim/Customtrim complaint (CJM, member organizations, and worker representatives) sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao in December 2001, requesting that an Evaluation Committee of Experts be convened, as the ministerial consultations recommended in the April 2001 official NAO report had produced no visible results. Chao rejected this request in February 2002. On May 7, 2002, California Democrat George Miller and thirty-five other members of Congress submitted a letter to Chao requesting an accounting of progress. The U.S. and Mexican Departments of Labor on June 11 signed a Ministerial Consultations Joint Declaration convening a binational group of government experts. This move was denounced in a June 24 CJM press release as being one more mechanism to continue nonbinding talks, delay specific actions to change working conditions, and exclude worker participation.



Courtesy Barb Thomas.

Worker-Educators and Union Transformation: A Canadian Perspective[1]

By Barb Thomas and D'Arcy Martin

We speak from both the wariness and the excitement of twenty years of contract and staff work in the Canadian labor movement. We are white, English-speaking Canadians, a woman and man in partnership, now middle-aged, with all the insights and limitations of those locations. Our passion is worker education. We want labor education to strengthen class-conscious activism, to build community and solidarity, to advance equity, to develop democratic processes, and to build effective labor organizations that contribute to a wider common good.

This is a tall order. While popular education methods within union courses can contribute to this broader vision, their potential can only be fully realized as part of a wider transformation of the union culture and structure. We have found that worker education programs can contribute significantly to this transformation.

This article outlines some aspects of the Canadian labor context and examines the rationale for worker-educator programs in that context. It also provides examples of how unions in Canada have started such programs, connects worker education programs to the practice of popular education, and provides a framework of four models of worker education programs.

Our Canadian Context

Some union activists in the United States see Canada as a kind of workers' paradise, with relatively strong public health and education structures, a public acceptance of social democratic parties as legitimate, and legal frameworks more permissive of unionization. But from the inside we are acutely aware of the difficulties in our movement. Canadian unions are fragmented by province and sector, uneven

Courtesy UCLA Labor Center.

D'Arcy Martin plays the role of Uncle Sam in an activity to teach about globalization.

in strength, and—although stronger than unions in the United States—have declined in density from 37 to 32 percent over the last ten years. Unionization in the public sector is 69.9 percent, while in the private sector it is only 18.7 percent. This weakness in the private sector and the overall decline in membership make Canadian unions very vulnerable. Public opinion is easily swayed against unions, as we have seen in some recent electoral sweeps by right-wing provincial governments and in the anti-union legislation such parties invariably bring with them.

In Ontario alone, a province of more than ten million people, it is necessary to organize 30,000 new members a year just to maintain current union representation, and we are well short of that level.[2] The leadership, at the middle as well as top levels, is still overwhelmingly white, male, and over forty-five, even though the workforce is increasingly racially diverse, female, and young.

As in most other industrialized countries, Canada's federal and provincial governments are actively involved in privatization,[3] deregulation of services, and tax measures that widen the gap between rich and poor.[4] This package is designed to create a more compliant workforce welcoming to investment by transnationals. In our federal parliament, the governing Liberals are cheerfully selling out the country through a series of "free trade" deals. Even social democratic provincial governments like those of the Parti Québécois in Québec and the New Democratic Party in Saskatchewan are bending to the winds of the neoliberal corporate storm blowing across North America.

As a result, Canadian unions have recently come under considerable pressure, of a sort that their U.S. counterparts have experienced for a generation. Governments across the country have undermined labor legislation, making it more difficult to organize, to maintain certification, and to protect—let alone advance—workers' rights. Bargaining is a nightmare, increasingly requiring strike votes and civil disobedience. The political drive to the right, particularly in the aftermath of the events of

September 11, 2001, in the United States, makes it increasingly hard to sustain a sense of dignity among workers, or a will to engage in collective action.

But unions in Canada haven't lost their nerve. While federal government grants to union education had fostered growth since the late 1970s, the abrupt end of public funding in the mid-1990s was actually followed by an increase in the number of workers enrolled in courses.[5] As corporate mergers and government restructuring have forced unions to compete for members, resources are still being committed to external organizing. As security-crazed politicians move to reduce immigration, unions are working internally and publicly against racism. It's not easy, but there are many signs of hope.

In our view, one such sign is the increasing use of worker-educator programs in Canadian unions. Given the differences in context and culture between Canada and the United States, we aren't suggesting that this practice can be transplanted automatically. From our experience, however, we hope readers can see one way that popular education practices in courses can be linked to progressive organizational change in the labor movement.

Why Use Worker-Educator Programs?

By *worker-educator programs* we mean the use of members as facilitators, teachers, or instructors of union learning—in courses, meetings, conventions, and so on. Most unions in Canada involve members in some aspect of educational work, to varying degrees and with varying results. There are many reasons to do so.

Maybe it's obvious, but let's say it anyway: workers know a lot. A union can draw on this knowledge to the benefit of its members and of the society the union wants to build. Worker-educators may or may not have much formal education. But they care about learning, their own and that of their fellow members, and they have talents to inspire members to learn. Worker-educators are often informal leaders who may or may not be interested in political leadership but who have capacities the union needs.

In many Canadian unions the staff and leadership are stretched to the breaking point. Most have little support to meet current pressures or develop new strategy. Traditional education programs, however well they may integrate popular education principles, can reach only a small proportion of the membership. Often there are huge time lags between requests and responses for education. These pressures can motivate a union to draw on members as educators and mobilizers. The issue is how to do this in local, regional, and national structures that were set up in a servicing rather than an organizing/mobilizing model of unionism. In other words, how can worker-educators move from being an "add-on" to being an integral force for union transformation?

In 1999, the Québec Federation of Labour celebrated twenty-five years of its worker-educator program, launched in 1974 as the *Formation des formateurs et formatrices.* During those years more

Courtesy Barb Thomas.

Natasha Goudar, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, and Judith Marshall, Steelworkers Humanity Fund, listen to Amber Hockin, Education and Campaigns Department of the Canadian Labour Congress.

than three thousand worker-educators have been trained. The Canadian Labour Congress has developed worker-educators in every region of the country and has supported affiliates in launching their own internal programs.

In the short run considerable initial outlays of time and replacement pay are necessary to develop worker-educators. But in the long run worker-educators are cheap. Worker-educators can reach more members, more quickly and more persuasively, than can staff. More members can learn and develop when there are more people teaching. And a worker-educator program can tap into a diverse membership, profoundly extending who's involved, who's in a position to support union initiatives, and who's in the upcoming layers of leadership.

For us, progressive union education can be recognized by the degree to which it consciously and skillfully builds democracy, class consciousness, and organizational capacity and contributes to the greater good. In our view worker-educators can help in all these dimensions.

How to Get Started

There are no perfect conditions for starting a worker-educator program. Often our best help is fatigue from what we've been doing and a desire for and openness to something new. We've found that the openings are different for each union and that educator-activists need to be attuned to the possibilities as they occur. For example, it helps if there is:

- a stated commitment by the leadership to organizing/mobilizing,
- strong administrative staff,
- an agreed budget for education,
- and an expressed interest by some members in doing educational work.

However, developing a worker-educator program can send big waves through a union, which may rock the boats of elected leaders, appointed staff, and workplace activists. People may oppose worker-educator programs because they are concerned about "a decline in the quality" of the education provided, or they're worried about displacing staff from part of their job, or they anticipate conflicts around the political loyalties of the people selected. All of these fears have some basis and need to be addressed respectfully. The good news is that many unions in Canada—public and private sector, large and small—have already begun a process of developing worker-educators as a strategy for building the union. Let's consider examples of starting points for three different unions. No matter what size or shape your union, we hope you can apply some of the strategies outlined below.

Courtesy Barb Thomas.

Jean Sylvestre, Education Service of the FTQ, speaks at a workshop on union education.

Case 1: Educating Stewards

A local had been receiving complaints about the lack of education it offered and how few people got it, but it wanted to maintain strict control of its education program. The local invited the education coordinator from the central office to a meeting to review his new stewards' program, which was highly participatory and based on popular education principles. The local had heard good things about the program and wanted the education coordinator to teach the course to all its stewards. Tensions between the central office and this local made joint work difficult, but it was not impossible to ensure that the local got what it needed.

The education coordinator requested that a committee close to the local leadership be part of the planning for the sessions and that committee members be potential worker-educators so they could get a head start thinking about the program in terms of popular education.

He asked that at least one elected officer attend each of the training sessions, or at least open that training, to demonstrate officer support for the program and answer any political questions that might arise in the training. The sessions were successful, generating enthusiasm, interest in stewardship, excitement about training, and increased support for the local. This process built a relationship between the education coordinator, the officers and staff of the local, and the membership. Eight member-educators were identified from the eight trainings. They attended the worker-educator training organized by the education coordinator, and the coordinator then began coaching them to teach the stewards' programs.

What Was Important

- Word of mouth helped create demand.
- The local remained in control of the process.
- The priority was getting stewards trained; when that need was met the local became more interested in worker-educators.
- Experiencing the program in action had more impact than talking: elected officers could see the effectiveness of popular education in fostering participation and enthusiasm.

Case 2: Developing a New Program

In recent elections the regional leadership had committed itself to move away from a "servicing model," in which stewards and representatives wait for members to come to them with grievances. They proposed an "organizing/mobilizing model," in which stewards and representatives act as internal organizers, engaging with members on a daily basis and encouraging them to get involved in all aspects of union life. The locals in this region had previously had little contact with each other, and "education" had been mostly an annual retreat for selected staff and members who handled health and safety issues and first-stage grievances. The new education coordinator was told to "build an education program" with a budget that was vague at best.

Courtesy Barb Thomas.

Adriane Paavo, Saskatchewan Grain Services Union, speaks on the structure of the Canadian labor movement.

The coordinator met one-on-one with a core of elected officers and staff to determine interest and support. She asked the locals to name delegates to a session to develop principles and priorities for a new education program that would meet their needs. The meeting resulted in some guiding principles and an outline for a new stewards' course.

The education coordinator documented the meeting and communicated the proceedings to all officers and meeting delegates. Subsequently, she worked with several delegates on drafting a new stewards' course and paid them from her budget.

The training was convened. Some officers of the locals themselves attended the course to see what was going on. It generated excitement and some agreement that a new kind of training to teach this course was required. Each promised to identify a couple of worker-educators who would be trained to teach the course in their local.

What Was Important

- Real consultation took place at the beginning.
- The process met the expressed need for a stewards' course that was more interesting and participatory, and that could reach more members.
- Participants were included in drafting a program.
- The education coordinator maintained continuous communication with the officers and participants of the consultation.
- Officers attended the pilot training.

Case 3: Changing the Organization

The staff of a public sector union, under a barrage of attacks from government, felt exhausted and cynical. Government cutbacks had eliminated many jobs through streamlining, privatization, and contracting out. Many members felt intimidated, stressed from work overload, fearful of their uncertain future, divided among themselves, and mistrustful and apathetic toward their union. Sound familiar?

The union's board began to craft a renewal project with two priorities: (a) win strong contracts and (b) build local leadership. A committee proposed a framework that linked basic union priorities to a strategy of popular education. The board adopted it.

The board took this framework to two conventions for ratification, each time supported unanimously by the delegates, each time emerging with more clarity through debate and discussion. While there was no disagreement about the vision, there was lots of resistance to yet another structure that looked participatory. The following were common refrains: "Another bloody committee!?" "Show me! We're good at starting things, but we never deliver." "Popular education is good for teaching literacy but not for union education." "Training? We've never had training. Here the rule is sink or swim." "You want us to have a strategic conversation? Some of us haven't talked to each other in years!" "There are too many turf wars for us to get together." "I'm too busy. What's this got to do with winning grievances?" "Is this some kind of gimmick to get someone reelected?"

A strategy that tied together the goals of bargaining, organizing, and shaping public policy evolved. Union activists were realizing that bargaining can't be conducted effectively in isolation from the effort to mobilize the membership, link with the community, and advocate for broader public policy change.

Courtesy D'Arcy Martin.

Elise Bryant of the George Meany Center with Barb Thomas.

Two staff educators were assigned to support the committee and project teams. The leadership provided many openings to allow popular education methods to be tested in union events. The network of educators—local activists, elected leaders, and staff—created a crisscross of interests and perspectives across the union. People began to experiment with different approaches to learning and doing, which:

1. established the union's basic negotiation standards for the first time,
2. offered basic, first-time collective bargaining training for all negotiators and professional staff, using popular education, and
3. provided mandatory training for all elected bargaining teams, six months in advance of bargaining, using a training program developed by a working group of staff and members, delivered by field staff.

Part of this mobilizing strategy involved conducting outreach workshops with members of color. Caucuses of equity-seeking groups such as the union's human rights committee and the women's committee brought an "equity framework" to the steering committee.

What Was Important

- A critical need was expressed: improving contracts and their enforcement.
- The officers demonstrated vision and leadership, and a willingness to try popular education.
- There was openness to debate in the organization and willingness to offer choices to people who were resistant.
- Both staff and members were involved from the beginning.
- The structure to guide the process was integrated into the way the union already functioned.
- The education coordinator built skill development into the planning and debate process rather than proposing stand-alone "training," which implied that veterans had something to learn!

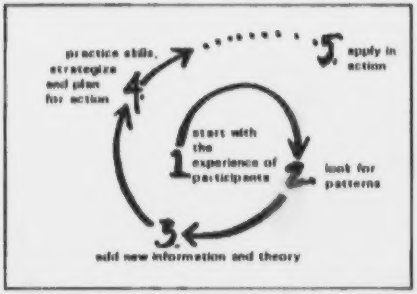
What's the Connection between Worker Education Programs and Popular Education?

We use a popular education approach in all the education, planning, and strategic work we do. In cases 1 and 2 above, the worker-educator trainings and the stewards' courses that the worker-educators taught were based on popular education methods. These courses used a variety of participatory activities that encouraged critical analysis of power in the workplace, ensured that participants learned from each other, tied new information to existing knowledge, and practiced skills for taking new kinds of actions. In case 3, popular education also shaped the way meetings were run, how planning tools were used, and the way follow-up was structured.

That said, our most powerful methodology springs from our belief that workers are smart, that we as educators have much to learn as well as something to teach, and that workers will learn as much about building a labor movement from being respected and seeing their brothers and sisters treated with respect as they will from anything else we do. *The spirit that we bring to education work is more important than any technique.*

In our training of worker-educators, we include the following as essential elements:

- How to create and sustain a climate of ease and connection within a group, even when there are tensions and conflict
- An understanding that popular education is not just a set of cute techniques but an approach to critical thinking and collective action for change in a world of very unequal power relations
- Practice with the spiral model as a tool for planning activist education[6]
- Examination of equity as a cornerstone of popular education
- Practice applying popular education in "real life," which may include anticipation of and practice in dealing with conflict and power
- Practice working visually rather than with dense texts


practice skills, strategize and plan for action
4.
5.
apply in action
1
start with the experience of participants
2.
look for patterns
3.
add new information and theory

The Spiral Model: Reprinted, with permission, from *Educating for a Change*, p. 38.

Four Models of Worker-Educator Programs

Keeping this in mind, it may help to imagine four models of worker-educators in unions.[7] As our case studies show, many Canadian unions have some combination of models 1 and 2, and some have

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elements of model 3. Model 4 represents our vision of how worker-educator programs might contribute most fully to a more democratic and mobilizing vision of unionism.

Model 1: On the Margins

In this approach, the union recognizes that it needs to expand its teaching capacity and use the talents of some of its activists. Members occasionally coteach or assist staff in teaching. "Teaching" is understood as the passing on of information and knowledge. Topics commonly taught by worker-educators are health and safety and basic stewards' courses. Beyond an initial course here and there, however, there is little training for either staff or worker-educators to become better teachers. On an irregular basis, people who teach may be sent to a course on their topic but rarely on being an effective adult educator.

With this approach staff conduct the education programs, and members are seen primarily as assistants to staff. The main goal of education is to ensure that grievances and health and safety problems are effectively handled by the elected union representatives in the workplace.

Model 2: On the Move

In this model, the union wants to expand training to more members. It may also want to expand mobilization in worksites and inspire new forms of union leadership. Education tends to be more varied and often looks to popular education for inspiration. Worker-educators are a key part of the education program and occasionally have input into course development. Worker-educators facilitate together in teams of two, with staff used as resources, or have prime responsibility for developing or revising courses. To be effective instructors, staff are offered training if they want it. All worker-educators get some training in good adult education techniques. An education coordinator works with local officers to build support for worker-educators at the local level.

Model 3: In the Program

This approach builds on some of the aspects of the "moving model" above. Here, however, the union is explicit in its agenda: it wants to mobilize members, establish its presence in workplaces, build member leadership, and maximize its capacity to influence employers, the public, and politicians. Education and the use of worker-educators are seen as a key strategy in this agenda. The union, therefore, tries to involve members in a variety of courses—globalization, organizing, bargaining for equality, stress, facing management—to draw on the interests and energies of members. Participatory education is highly valued, and the union tries to base its education in popular education principles and methods.

Worker-educators develop and revise courses, and there is regular training and upgrading to develop teaching skills and keep them current. All courses are cofacilitated by worker-educators either on their own or with staff, to bring more skills and experience to participants and to model equity in union courses. Indeed, consistent efforts are made to have a cadre of educators who are diverse in gender, race, worksite, age, region, job, and (dis)ability. Worker-educators are brought together regularly (usually annually) to build skills and strategy and to provide an additional forum for them to influence the education program. Worker-educators are a line item in a budget that includes money for staff, replacement time, and administration. Staff are also trained to be effective union educators but may apply their skills to organizing, bargaining, or courses where worker-educators may not yet have experience.

Increased excitement about education and about member power is notable in such programs. The union begins to enjoy the fruits of more distributed competence and increased activism from a wider variety of members.

Model 4: Part of a Wider Change

Can we imagine a fourth model? Of course, but we haven't yet seen it in action. This model seeks to achieve all the advantages of the "in the program" model above, but also to transform other ways in which the union does business. In this model, members have influence in all aspects of union life, part of a union-wide strategy to democratize the union. Education is drawn upon to strengthen processes of discussion and decision making and to connect all departments in joint work. Education is seen as vital to help the union strengthen links with various sectors in the community. Connections between worker-educators are strong throughout the union, where all courses and meetings are cofacilitated. Indeed, worker-educators cofacilitate conferences, conventions, and meetings in which good process is valued.

The union takes leadership in advancing social justice inside and outside the organization. Effective, broad-based education in the workplace and elsewhere is seen as essential in reinforcing this process. Staff support the skill development of members, including worker-educators, and are active in building solidarity with the community.

These four models of worker-educators differ in their goals and vision, in the role of education in the union, in the philosophy of education and learning, in the power relations between staff and members, and in the tensions they incur in the union. You might add points, or even think of a fifth approach from your own union experience. We offer these "models" here to stimulate thinking about the possibilities and limitations of current worker-educator programs.

Conclusions

With a worker-educator program, we're building for the long term. Whether working at a local, regional, or national level, this means:

- Building support for the education program
- Building an infrastructure that supports the program
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities
- Clarifying who pays for what
- Having working links with the rest of the union
- Building union links with communities

None of this is easy. Sometimes we only get to do one-tenth of what we hope to do, and we have to count that as a success. But worker-educator programs are a powerful tool for strengthening our labor movements. When regarded as part of a wider commitment to an organizing/mobilizing model of unionism, and when undertaken with a popular education perspective, they are an integral part of union transformation.

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[1] A longer version of this article will appear in chapter ten of a book coauthored by Bev Burke, Jojo Geronimo, D'Arcy Martin, Barb Thomas, and Carol Wall, *Education for Changing Unions*, to be published in December 2002, by Between the Lines Publishing, Toronto.

[2] According to Statistics Canada, Ontario's population numbered 11,874,436 as of January 2002.

[3] Years of sustained work on these trends in Canada can be accessed through http://www.policyalternatives.ca, the site of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, a progressive think tank founded in Ottawa with offices in a growing number of Canadian cities.

[4] For ongoing detailed research on this point, go to http://www.socialjustice.org, where the Toronto-based Centre for Social Justice maintains its research on the growing gap and initiatives to close the gap. Historically, of course, unions have been a major force for equalizing wealth distribution within industrialized economies.

[5] See Alan Thomas, David Beatty, and Dorothy MacKeracher, *Labour Canada's Labour Education Program: The First Four Years* (Ottawa: Labour Canada, 1982).

[6] The "spiral model" is a design tool that reminds educators to (a) start with workers' experience and knowledge; (b) use some way to collectivize what people know; (c) add new information and frameworks to challenge people to think critically about what they know; and (d) practice new skills and plan for action so that learning is applied in the world. See Rick Arnold, Bev Burke, Carl James, D'Arcy Martin, and Barb Thomas, *Educating for a Change* (Toronto: Between the Lines Publishing, 1991). See also Burke, Geronimo, Martin, Thomas, and Wall, *Education for Changing Unions.*

[7] In some unions these will be steps in a single process toward a fully democratized and mobilized union. We don't hide the fact that model 4 is our preferred vision. However, the context and culture of unions varies so wildly across North America that a progressive union leadership whose focus is organizing in a hostile climate may still choose model 2 for its education program.

Contributors

STEPHANIE ARELLANO

Stephanie Arellano is a queer, biracial native of Flint, Michigan, who got her start as an educator for social change during her student organizing days when she attended a Grass Roots Organizing Weekend (GROW) sponsored by the Midwest Academy and the U.S. Student Association. After her term at USSA she took a position at SEIU Local 1877 as an internal organizer. For the next five years she worked with the union to develop rank-and-file leadership through innovative training and education programs. She played a critical role in the countywide janitors' strike in 2000. Currently she is at the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education developing a worker resource center in downtown Los Angeles.

DAVID BACON

David Bacon was a union organizer and factory worker for two decades. Today he works as a photographer, writer, and radio journalist, and is associate editor for Pacific News Service. His photographs have been shown in Germany, Great Britain, Mexico, and the United States. His book, *Children of NAFTA*, to be published by UC Press this winter, describes the history of the cross-border organizing movement over the last decade. His current photodocumentary project, "Transnational Working Communities," is sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation.

ROBIN BAKER

Robin has served for the past twenty years as the director of the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at UC Berkeley and is a member of the California Federation of Teachers Local 1474. She is involved in a wide range of projects that help workers demand their health, safety, and dignity on the job. Her first exposure to popular education was in the 1970s when she developed an outreach and training program for electronics workers in California's Silicon Valley. She was a founding member of the Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health (SCCOSH).

ELAINE BERNARD

Elaine Bernard is executive director of the Trade Union Program at Harvard University and the Labor and Worklife Program at Harvard Law School. Bernard has conducted courses on a wide variety of topics for unions, community groups, universities, and government departments. Her current research and teaching interests are in the areas of international comparative labor movements and the role of unions in promoting civil society, democracy, and economic growth.

LIZ BROWN

Liz Brown is administrative officer for the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild Local 37082 of the Communications Workers of America in Seattle, Washington. She represents the Printing and Communications Trades on the executive board of the King County Labor Council, and cochairs the council's Education Committee.

ELISE BRYANT

Elise was artistic director of Michigan's labor theatre project, Workers' Lives/Workers' Stories. She joined the National Writers Union and began her screenwriting career with a script for the documentary, *Porgy and Bess: An American Voice,* aired in 2001 on PBS. Since coming to the George Meany Center, Elise made her Washington, D.C., stage debut in Theatre J's production of *Goodnight Irene* and founded the D.C. Labor Chorus. She was awarded a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Michigan. Elise is a lifetime member of the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World) and a member of the Writers Guild (UAW Local 1981) as well as CWA/Newspaper Guild Local 35.

LAURA CHENVEN

Laura Chenven's first formal experience with popular education was as a delegate trainer for New York Local 1199 where she was also a member. In the process of teaching the class, she realized that many rank-and-file leaders in the union were struggling to read contracts and write grievances. Inspired by those workers, she returned to school to get a degree in reading with a specialization in adult literacy. Since then Ms. Chenven has worked in both union and community settings in the field of literacy education, staff development, and program design and development. She has been education director of both SEIU Local 82 and SEIU District 1199E-DC. She currently works at the AFL-CIO Working for America Institute where she is the northeast regional coordinator.

KATARINA DAVIS DEL VALLE

Katarina has been educator, organizer, negotiator, strike leader, field representative, and steward over her twenty-five years with SEIU. She began her educator-organizer work as a steward teaching workshops on organizing for childcare in union contracts. Currently SEIU western regional educator, Katarina leads and coordinates local union education and training programs. She also teaches union leadership classes through the Los Angeles Trade Technical College Labor Studies Program. In both roles, popular education principles guide her work. Katarina is a western region board member of the United Association for Labor Education (UALE) and member of the California legislature's Commission on Labor Education. She wrote "Labor Union Sisters: Changing from Within" which was published in the UCLA Institute of Industrial Relations' *Women At Work II*, 1989.

JUAN DE LARA

Juan De Lara is a project director with the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education. He has worked as an organizer with several unions. Juan studied Latin American urbanization at Oxford University and received a master's in urban planning from UCLA. He was previously the director of the Pitzer College Ontario Program, a community research and education program that used participatory action research as a framework for leveraging university resources for the benefit of working poor communities. Students worked closely with community organizations to design research projects that could be used in organizing campaigns. His current work at UCLA is focused on student education programs and policy initiatives.

LINDA DELP

Linda Delp is a project director with the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education, a doctoral candidate in the School of Public Health, and a member of the University Professional Technical Employees (UPTE)/CWA. Her previous jobs include project director with the UCLA Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program and SEIU western region health and safety director. She has developed worker health and safety popular education programs with union members, *maquiladora* workers, and high school students. Her current research focuses on the use of popular education in worker health and safety, home care worker organizing campaigns, and the effectiveness of the NAFTA labor side agreement. She has been a board member of the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras and is a cofounder of the Southern California Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health (COSH).

PETER DOOLEY

Peter F. Dooley, M.S., C.I.H., C.S.P., has been with the UAW Health and Safety Department for eighteen years and is a member of UAW Local 1981. His work involves education, workplace inspections, investigations, collective bargaining, and service to local unions. He has served on many boards and committees including those of local and national COSH groups, ANSI committees, the State of Michigan Health Standards Commission, and the American Public Health Association (APHA). He was the recipient of the 1996 Lorin Kerr Award for activism from the Occupational Health and Safety section of APHA. His greatest interests are infusing health and safety into organizing campaigns and popular education.

ANNETTE GONZÁLEZ

Annette González is president of AFSCME Local 3234/Servidores Publicos Unidos, representing eight thousand workers in the Departamento de Familia in Puerto Rico. She has been a caseworker in the department for ten years and was a leader in the organizing efforts that ultimately led to the union's victory. She is a strong advocate for workers' rights and leads efforts to give a voice to women workers. As a worker and president of her local, Annette actively promotes the use of a popular education approach to organize and develop leaders in the union.

GILDA HAAS

Gilda Haas is an organizer and educator who has been helping grassroots organizations build economic development from the ground up for over twenty-five years. Ms. Haas has taught economic development at UCLA's School of Public Policy and Social Research for fifteen years and was also the founding director of UCLA's Community Scholars Program. She is presently the director of Strategic Actions for a Just Economy, a popular education and organizing center in Los Angeles that is dedicated to the economic empowerment of working-class people. She is married to Gary Phillips, a mystery writer, and has two teenage children, Miles, fifteen, and Chelsea, fourteen.

JOHN HURST

John Hurst has been a professor of education at the University of California at Berkeley since 1961. He has played a central role in the founding and development of a number of innovative, interdisciplinary education programs and centers on the Berkeley campus that focus on understanding and crafting democratic solutions to outstanding societal and global challenges. Students are active partners in the decisions that affect these programs, including: the Conservation and Resource Studies major in the College of Natural Resources (1971); the Peace and Conflict Studies major in the College of Letters and Sciences (1984); the undergraduate minor in Education (1991); and the Democratic Education at CAL program of the student government (1980). In 2000 he cofounded with a group of graduate students the Center for Popular Education and Participatory Research.

JOSÉ LA LUZ

José La Luz is a longtime popular educator, from his days as former national education director with the Clothing and Textile Workers' Union to his current position as executive director of Servidores Publicos Unidos/AFSCME in Puerto Rico where he has worked for the past seven and a half years leading AFSCME's public sector organizing drive. Before his work in Puerto Rico, José was associate education director with AFSCME. He has also served as education officer of the Inter-American Federation for Textile workers, conducting popular and worker education activities throughout the Americas and convening numerous gatherings of educators from Mexico, the United States, and Canada. He is a vigorous and passionate advocate of workers' empowerment through educating for change.

D'ARCY MARTIN

D'Arcy Martin has been Canadian education director for three different unions, including a job share at SEIU with Barb Thomas. He has conceived, administered, and led union courses in every province of Canada, including the course "Facing Management" and subsequent material on union strategies for training and workplace reorganization. Currently he works on contracts with unions, especially the Québec Federation of Labour (FTQ). He is also coordinator of the Centre for the Study of Education and Work at the University of Toronto, which brings together academics and unionists to research the often hidden, informal learning of workers.

JANE MCALEVEY

Jane McAlevey has been an organizer and educator for over fifteen years. From community-based organizing to antitoxics organizing; from a deep engagement with popular education while on staff at the Highlander Research and Education Center to union organizing; Jane has held firm to one central idea: leadership development, whatever it's called, has to be central to any movement serious about overcoming the enormous obstacles in the way of a more just society.

VIVIAN ROTHSTEIN

Vivian Rothstein is currently director for community and clergy organizing for HERE Locals 11 and 814 in Los Angeles, California. Previously she directed the Respect at LAX multi-union organizing effort at the Los Angeles International Airport. Vivian has a long history of social activism as a community organizer and social services provider extending back to her involvement in the Mississippi Freedom Summer project of 1965.

SUSAN J. SCHURMAN

Susan J. Schurman is president of the George Meany Center for Labor Studies-The National Labor College. She received her B.A. and M.A. degrees from Michigan State University and her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in Higher, Adult and Continuing Education. From 1992 to 1997 she was director of Labor Extension Programs and associate professor of labor studies in the School of Management and Labor Relations at Rutgers-the State University of New Jersey. Prior to 1992 she directed the Labor Studies Center at the University of Michigan, where she was also a research investigator in the School of Public Health. She is a former nonprofit executive and a former local union president. Schurman's research and teaching focuses on the effects of work on adult development and on physical and mental health. She is especially interested in the role of unions in representing employees' health and developmental concerns. She is the author or coauthor of numerous articles on restructuring work and employment to prevent illness and promote learning and development.

Jim Sessions

Jim Sessions is executive director of the AFL-CIO Union Community Fund. He was director of the Highlander Research and Education Center from 1993 to 1999 and has also served as director of the Southern Appalachian Ministry, Southerners for Economic Justice, and the Commission on Religion in Appalachia. Jim, his wife Fran Ansley, and their family have lived and worked in East Tennessee for the last thirty years.

Pam Tau Lee

Pam is a strong advocate for popular education (PE) and participatory action research (PAR). With a decade of experience, she has found that popular education and PAR are the most effective methods for mobilizing worker and immigrant community participation. Her experience with room cleaners in Las Vegas and San Francisco illustrate how PE and PAR are powerful tools for social justice and leadership development. She had many years of experience as a union activist and staff member before becoming a labor educator with the Labor Occupational Health Program at UC Berkeley ten years ago.

Ellen Teninty

Ellen Teninty's work developing innovative employment training programs for women on welfare in the 1970s and her organizing experience building statewide coalitions of labor and religious organizations in the early 1980s provide a practical foundation for her work on economic policy. For the last fifteen years Ellen has developed and led training programs on the economy. She is known for her skill at making complex economic topics inviting and exciting and moving people to action. Ellen is also in a dance group and on a soccer team. She is a graduate of Harvard University.

BARB THOMAS

Barb Thomas is a labour and community educator, writer, facilitator, and organization developer. Her passions are facilitating training, developing antiracism/equity education, and promoting democratic organizational change processes. Since 1980 she has worked with the labor movement in a variety of capacities, including a job share with D'Arcy Martin as Canadian education director of SEIU. And she has worked with many other nonprofit organizations (women's and community groups, school boards, human services organizations, arts organizations, and government agencies) in Canada and internationally. She is a coauthor of *Educating for a Change* and several other books.

LINDA TUBACH

Linda Tubach is a high school teacher and director of the Collective Bargaining Education Project in the Los Angeles Unified School District. Linda has been teaching U.S. history, government, and economics in Los Angeles for twenty years. Four years ago she received a grant to launch the first (and only) full-time labor education program for high school students in the nation. She currently works at a different high school each week, teaching students about the labor movement through simulations of collective bargaining, union organizing campaigns, and historic strikes. Linda is active in United Teachers Los Angeles and chairs the California Federation of Teachers' Labor in the Schools Committee.

JENNY LEE UTECH

Jenny Lee Utech taught ESOL for the Worker Education Program (WEP) from 1995 to 1999 at SEIU Local 285 where she collaborated with other WEP staff to develop participatory curricula that would help members learn more about their unions and become more active. She served as WEP's director from 1999 to 2000 and is now working for the Massachusetts Worker Education Roundtable to develop training for teachers in labor-management education programs for workers. Jenny first worked with Freirian-based adult education as an ESOL teacher and education program director at Centro Presente, a center in Cambridge for Central American refugees, from 1987 to 1992.

JENICE L. VIEW

Jenice L. View is currently the executive director of the Just Transition Alliance. Her professional experience includes domestic and international public policy; community-based development in rural and urban areas; and curriculum design, workshops, and lectures in the areas of education, economic literacy, the economics of racism, the global economy and women, and community-based leadership.

She holds a B.A. from Syracuse University and an M.P.A./U.R.P. from Princeton University. However, once she discovered popular education in 1988, she never looked back. Her doctorate from the Graduate School of the Union Institute and University focuses on education, specializing in critical pedagogy and African American Studies.

SUSAN M. WASHINGTON

Susan Washington has been with the AFL-CIO since 1987. She currently serves as executive assistant to AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. She previously held the position of director of the AFL-CIO's Education Department. Her entire career has been built using popular education techniques and methods to conduct successful union education programs. She is motivated and inspired when she witnesses the power of people learning from each other through their own experiences.

SUSAN WILLIAMS

Susan Williams has worked for over twenty-three years as a community organizer, a popular educator, and a participatory researcher in East Tennessee (although like many activists she did all of these things before she learned these terms!). She works at the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee, helping coordinate the center's popular education work and the resource center/library archives. She worked with the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network for its first nine years, and it changed her life.

KENT WONG

Kent Wong is director of the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education, where he teaches labor studies and Asian American studies. Previously Kent worked for six years as staff attorney for the Service Employees International Union Local 660, representing forty thousand Los Angeles County workers. He also served as staff attorney for the Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California. From 2000 to 2002 Kent served as president of the United Association for Labor Education, a national professional association of labor educators. From 1992 to 1997 he served as the founding president of the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, the first nationwide Asian American labor organization within the AFL-CIO.

Resources

U.S. Organizations

A. Labor Education

AFL-CIO: Resources and information on current issues of concern to working families; links to unions, community-based organizations, university and college labor education centers, and other websites. 815 16th St NW, Washington DC 20006, tel. (202) 637-5000, http://www.aflcio.org.

BRECHT FORUM: Includes year-round classes, forum and panel discussions, language instruction, bilingual poetry readings, art exhibits, and participatory theater workshops. Its work is organized through projects including the New York Marxist School, the Institute for Popular Education and the Organizer's Program, and Arts at the Brecht. 122 W 27th St, New York NY 20002, (212) 242-4202, http://www.brechtforum.org.

CENTER FOR POPULAR EDUCATION AND PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH (CPEPR): A student-initiated center seeking to increase the participation of youth, working families, and people of color in the movement for social justice through popular education, it is working to form a partnership between graduate students, community organizations, their members, and the academic community. 4608 Tolman Hall, UC Berkeley Graduate School of Education, Berkeley CA 94720, tel. (510) 642-2856, http://www-gse.berkeley.edu/research/pepr.

GEORGE MEANY CENTER FOR LABOR STUDIES-THE NATIONAL LABOR COLLEGE: Offering weekend and weeklong courses and workshops on organizing, leadership development, negotiations, health and safety, and union building. Offers bachelor's and master's degree programs through the University of Baltimore. 10000 New Hampshire Ave, Silver Springs MD 20903, tel. (301) 431-6400, http://www.georgemeany.org.

HIGHLANDER RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER: Conducts popular education workshops with grassroots activists primarily from the southern and Appalachian United States. Popular education and other social change materials (including music CDs and videos) can be ordered from the bookstore. 1959 Highlander Way, New Market TN 37820, tel. (865) 933-3443, http://www.highlandercenter.org.

PROJECT SOUTH: A community-based membership institute that develops and conducts popular political and economic education. Project South sells publications containing work on popular education based in the southern United States. 9 Gammon Ave SW, Atlanta GA 30315, tel. (404) 662-0602, http://www.projectsouth.org.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS FOR A JUST ECONOMY (SAJE): A social justice and popular education center that focuses on building economic power for working-class people through organizing, popular education, and coalition-building, SAJE publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Making Sense.* 2636 Kenwood Ave, Los Angeles CA 90007, tel. (323) 732-9961, http://www.saje.net.

TENNESSEE INDUSTRIAL RENEWAL NETWORK (TIRN): A community-labor-religious coalition working to change economic policy, TIRN creates popular education workshops and materials on globalization, trade, and living wage issues. 1515 E Magnolia Ave Ste 403, Knoxville TN 37917, tel. (865) 637-1576, http://www.tirn.org.

UNITED ASSOCIATION FOR LABOR EDUCATION (UALE): Includes union and university-based labor educators as members, as well as labor centers throughout the United States. See links on the website to contact labor education programs in your area, http://www.uale.org.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (WILD): A grassroots organization of women from diverse backgrounds and cultures working to increase the number of women leaders in the Massachusetts labor movement. Through bilingual, one-day organizing institutes, a Summer Leadership Development and Skills Training Program, and ongoing classes and workshops, WILD conducts popular education and training for women in unions, organizing drives, and immigrant rights and community-based organizations. 33 Harrison Ave 4th fl, Boston MA 02111, tel. (617) 426-0520, http://www.wildlabor.org.

B. Popular Economics Education

JOBS WITH JUSTICE: Teaching economics to workers and community activists since 1987. 501 3rd St NW, Washington DC 20001, tel. (202) 434-1106, http://www.jwj.org.

UNITED FOR A FAIR ECONOMY: Boston-based organization focusing on popular economics education. 37 Temple Pl 2nd fl, Boston MA 02111, tel. (617) 423-2148, http://www.ufenet.org.

RESPONSIBLE WEALTH: Affiliated with United for a Fair Economy; highlights the dangers of income and wealth disparity in the United States, http://www.responsiblewealth.org.

CENTER FOR POPULAR ECONOMICS (CPE): Teaches economic literacy to activists for progressive social change; creates and communicates economic theories that challenge systems of oppression based on class, race, gender, and nation. Box 785, Amherst MA 01004, tel. (413) 545-0743, http://www.populareconomics.org.

C. Worker Health and Safety Education Resources

HAZARDS MAGAZINE: Worker health and safety education resources at http://www.hazards.org/diyresearch/index.htm.

NATIONAL COSH NETWORK: Health and safety resources and a list of COSH and affiliated worker health and safety organizations, http://www.coshnetwork.org.

UCLA LABOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM (LOSH): University-based occupational health and safety program in California. Box 951478, Los Angeles CA 90095-1478, tel. (310) 794-5964, http://www.losh.ucla.edu.

UC BERKELEY LABOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM (LOHP): University-based occupational health and safety program in California. 2223 Fulton St, Berkeley CA 94720-5120, tel. (510) 642-5507, http://ist-socrates.berkeley.edu/~lohp/.

Canadian Resources

ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR WORK AND COMMUNITY STUDIES: An online resource for union courses and information. 1 University Dr, Athabasca AB T9S 3A3, Canada, http://www.athabascau.ca/labourstudies. See in particular the survey and history of union education in Canada (2001), http://unionlearning.athabascau.ca.

CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS (CLC): News in English and French from Canada's central labor body, including its educational initiatives. 2841 Riverside Dr, Ottawa ON K1V 8X7 Canada, http://www.clc-ctc.ca.

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: A research organization with material on economic and social inequality. See for example, the report, "Canada's Creeping Economic Apartheid," 2001. 489 College St Ste 303, Toronto ON M6G 1A5, Canada, http://www.socialjustice.org.

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF EDUCATION AND WORK (CSEW): Research centre at the University of Toronto which concentrates on learning issues and runs exchanges among North American labour educators. 252 Bloor St W, Toronto ON M5S 1V6, Canada, http://www.oise.utoronto.ca.

FÉDÉRATION DES TRAVAILLEURS ET TRAVAILLEUSES DU QUÉBEC (FTQ): News in French from Québec's largest union center, including its educational initiatives. 545, Boulevard Crémazie Est, 17 étage, Montreal (Québec) H2M 2V1, Canada, http://www.ftq.qc.ca.

Latin American Resources

CONSEJO DE EDUCACIÓN DE ADULTOS DE AMÉRICA LATINA: A council of over 195 organizations involved in popular education and participatory research throughout Latin America. The website is in Spanish with links to its member organizations. Toledo No 46, Colonia Juárez, 06600 México, D.F., México, http://www.ceaal.org.

ALFORJA: A regional program coordinating popular education in México and Central America. http://www.alforja.org.

Asian Resources

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH IN ASIA (PRIA): A Dehli-based organization using knowledge-building, capacity-building, and policy advocacy to increase grassroots involvement in participatory development and research; also acts as a publishing unit for progressive books, journals, newsletters, audio, and video. 42 Tughlakabad, Institutional Area, New Dehli 110062, India, http://www.pria.org.

International Networks

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR ADULT EDUCATION (ICAE): A global partnership of over one hundred organizations representing an adult education movement through workshops, seminars, publications, and research. Conducts popular education to encourage learning in areas as varied as gender issues, peace and human rights, and the environment. It publishes *Convergence*, a leading journal in its field. 720 Bathurst St Ste 500, Toronto ON M5S 2R4, Canada, http://www.web.net/icae/index.html.

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WORKERS' EDUCATION ASSOCIATIONS (IFWEA): A worldwide federation of associations for workers' education, trade unions, and labor organizations, based mostly in Europe. Its website includes a wide range of links to their member organizations, as does its quarterly publication, *Workers' Education.* Box 8703, Youngstorget, 0028 Oslo, Norway, http://www.ifwea.org.

To Order Popular Education Materials

BETWEEN THE LINES BOOKS: http://www.btlbooks.com/New_Titles/unions.htm

THE CATALYST CENTRE: http://www.catalystcentre.ca/index.htm

ISBN 0-615-12275-2

Teaching for Change: Popular Education and the Labor Movement is the first book to capture the stories and experiences of popular educators in the U.S. labor movement. From the Highlander Center in Tennessee to the Justice for Janitors campaign in Los Angeles, from the National Labor College in Maryland to the Avondale Shipyard workers of Mississippi, popular education has played a critical role in organizing workers, developing new leaders, and strengthening labor and community alliances. While drawing from the rich history of popular educators nationally and internationally, popular educators today are forging a new path based on the changing needs and conditions of workers and unions.

Featuring essays by:

Stephanie Arellano
David Bacon
Robin Baker
Elaine Bernard
Liz Brown
Elise Bryant
Laura Chenven
Katarina Davis Del Valle
Juan De Lara
Linda Delp
Peter Dooley
Annette Gonzalez
Gilda Haas
John Hurst
Jose La Luz
D'Arcy Martin
Jane McAlevey
Vivian Rothstein
Susan J. Schurman
Jim Sessions
Pam Tau Lee
Ellen Teninty
Barb Thomas
Linda Tubach
Jenny Lee Utech
Jenice L. View
Susan M. Washington
Susan Williams

Edited by Linda Delp, Miranda Outman-Kramer, Susan J. Schurman, Kent Wong
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Photo: Three "families" demonstrate where their money goes in a tax policy workshop. Courtesy Just Economics.

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